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

*Statement by H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the Security Council to the United Nations*

Mr. President, thank you for initiating today's special debate. Bosnia and Herzegovina's own transition is considerable. Your country has rapidly moved from recipient of international assistance in a conflict and post-conflict environment to contributor to international peace and security as a member of the Security Council. I applaud your readiness to create a platform to share experiences in institution-building and to strengthen our common efforts.

Building effective and legitimate institutions is a difficult task, even under the most favourable conditions. It presents even greater challenges in post- conflict situations. Unfortunately, the track record of international support to institution-building is mixed. We can do better.

Institutions can be critical in sustaining peace and reducing the risk of relapse into violence. Building legitimate and effective institutions that respect and promote human rights therefore must be a central element of the overall peacebuilding effort.

This open debate offers an important opportunity to review the Council's own role in this area and the lessons we have learned. Experience suggests that there are three major lessons we need to apply to our collective efforts.

First, we need to reinforce national ownership and leadership and build on existing institutions. I speak not only of national Governments or core State institutions, but also of local governments, affiliated bodies, communities, the private sector, women's groups and other civil society actors.

Responsive and inclusive institutions can be built only by national actors, using their knowledge of the context, the institutions that do exist and the root causes of conflicts. International assistance has to build on what is already there and can help by identifying, protecting and nurturing latent national capacities. The ongoing review of international civilian capacity is guided by this principle. International capacity assistance should mentor national capacities, never substitute for them.

More nimble and agile systems are also required, including stronger partnerships that can provide the most appropriate civilian capacity, particularly from developing countries and among women. Access to reliable, early and flexible funding will also advance this goal.

Secondly, we must avoid one-size-fits-all solutions. Attempts to impose an outside model on a post-conflict country can do more harm than good. Each country's institutions develop on their own trajectory and at their own pace. They should be allowed to develop incrementally and with a certain level of experimentation to learn and change. Similarly, institutional change should not be approached as a technical exercise. Rather, it should be viewed and pursued within the broader context of a country's political processes, development and social change.

In Guinea-Bissau, we have found that weak institutions at multiple levels remain one of the main causes of political instability and the lack of socio-economic development.

Institutions are not just bricks and mortar. They are also about informal norms and values, trust and social cohesion. Public confidence in the police, for example, is required for reformed police forces to be effective and to regain authority. Shared norms are necessary to enable legal systems to apply the law equally to all, including different ethnic groups, minorities and women. Respect for international standards, including human rights law, will support public trust in institutions.

Building these intangible qualities and capacities and addressing public perceptions are particularly important in post-conflict societies. International assistance can sometimes facilitate such change, but only if it is highly sensitive to political and social dynamics and how they evolve over time.

Thirdly, institution-building should start early and be sustained not only for years, but decades. In the short term, early and tangible progress needs to be made in a few priority areas to restore confidence and increase the legitimacy of national institutions. Such gains could include providing security in key areas of the country, increasing access to justice systems or expanding health and education services. Quick and focused capacity development can enable key institutions to begin functioning again. Peacekeepers, development and humanitarian actors can play an important role in this regard.

At the same time, premature reform efforts can be risky, particularly if they are taking place under a short- term transitional Government and before a first post- conflict electoral process. Striking the right balance between short- and long-term efforts is critical — and so, too, is the linkage between the two. International efforts have often failed to recognize that building effective institutions is a long-term effort, even in relatively stable conditions. Some progress can be made in three to five years, but expectations need to be realistic. This, of course, has implications for the Council and the missions it mandates.

In recent years, we have seen a marked increased in institution-building mandates from the Council for peacekeeping operations and political missions. Where missions are mandated to support institution-building, including rule of law and security institutions, we must do more to ensure, right from the start, a strong engagement with other international actors. This requires stronger partnerships and coordination among the Council, the Secretariat, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international financial institutions, regional organizations and others.

As the Council reviews its mandates and plans for transitions, it could engage these partners more frequently and directly so as to ensure a smooth transition to other actors when our missions leave. In this regard, the Peacebuilding Commission provides an important political platform for countries on its agenda, which can help to focus attention on long-term institution-building priorities and mobilize resources for them, share lessons learned and sustain engagement by the international community.

There is much that we can do to improve our efforts, reduce fragmentation and promote a coherent approach. We can better reflect institution-building in assessments, identify what existing institutions are present and can be developed, and ensure better predictability and accountability for delivery by the United Nations system.

Many of the steps we are taking as part of our peacebuilding and integration agendas are strengthening coherence within the United Nations system, including integrated strategic frameworks that now bring together the missions and United Nations country teams around shared strategic objectives. But we can achieve greater coherence only with the active support of Member States. For example, we need greater consistency across mandating authorities to facilitate more effective cooperation and smooth transitions. Greater coherence and coordination among donors are equally important, and need to start from the earliest stages.

The Council, for its part, should provide clear and achievable mandates and carefully consider the role of a range of actors within and beyond the United Nations system. The Council and the missions it mandates play a crucial role in building some of the most important institutions in post-conflict countries.

Our success will depend on whether we can deploy the right expertise and resources at the right time, how well we work with our national and international partners, and whether we actually apply the lessons we have learned. Once again, I thank you, Sir, for your commitment to and focus on this vital issue, for your initiative and for sharing your country's example.