

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
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Statement by H.E. Ms. Bernadette Cavanagh, Deputy Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

I would like to thank the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for convening today's open debate. In the interest of time, I will deliver a shortened version of my statement. Hard copies of the full version are being circulated.

Experience has shown that laying the foundations for effective Government institutions is fundamental to securing durable peace. However, despite the global community's best efforts, it is easier to point to examples of qualified failure than to any of unqualified success. Put simply, institution-building is inherently difficult. No clear blueprint exists for doing it effectively. Considerable work remains to be done to develop our understanding of best practices and the practical tools to do the job.

New Zealand has been an active participant in peacebuilding efforts in our region and beyond, including as a significant contributor to United Nations and United Nations-mandated operations in Timor-Leste, Bougainville, Afghanistan and Solomon Islands. I would like to share the following lessons we have drawn from our past involvement in institution-building in post-conflict societies.

First, missions with an institution-building component must make national capacity-building a core consideration in their planning and operations from day one. That requires a careful assessment of existing domestic capacities and priority capacity-building needs from the earliest stage of mandate formation. It is crucial that those assessments also include how the benefits of institution-building can be spread beyond capital cities to regions and local communities. It is important that consideration be given to how a mission's activities can best foster national capacities and, conversely, how to avoid displacing such capacities or stifling their emergence. Effective institution-building also requires a clear definition of the specific objectives being pursued and of how assistance will transition to traditional development partners once those have been achieved. At the same time, it is important to balance that clarity in direction and goals with sufficient flexibility to enable mission leadership to adapt to changes on the ground.

Secondly, institution-building must be pursued in accordance with nationally agreed priorities and objectives. That is crucial to ensuring national ownership, effective coordination and a greater chance that capacities built will be sustained over the long term. An inclusive approach to priority-setting is required. Local communities and civil society play a crucial role in holding together conflict-affected societies.

Thirdly, institution-building assistance must be grounded in a clear-eyed assessment of what capacities are appropriate and sustainable over the long term. Missions must ensure that the institutions they help develop are capable of surviving their departure without placing excessive strain on host Governments. To do otherwise is to risk generating expectations that cannot be fulfilled or to set States up for long-term dependence on external assistance.

Fourthly, coordination of institution-building assistance is crucial to ensuring its coherence and effectiveness. Important strides have been made within the United Nations system on delivering as one. But that remains a work in progress. It is particularly important that clarity be established early on among actors and leadership teams on the ground regarding respective roles and responsibilities. Better coordination is also required with other actors, notably international financial institutions, bilateral donors and civil society. In particular, we welcome ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General to enhance United Nations-World Bank coordination on post-conflict institution-building. Significant scope still remains to make such coordination work more systematic and effective.

Fifthly, there must be a clear recognition of which institution-building tasks Council-mandated missions should lead on and which tasks other actors are better equipped for. United Nations missions have a crucial role in carrying out immediate stabilization tasks, in supporting the early development of core State institutions essential for maintaining stability and security, in the early articulation of institution-building priorities and in facilitating the delivery of assistance by others. However, many institution-building challenges remain better suited to agencies and donors with a longer-term focus and with a greater accumulation of relevant skills and

experience.

Finally, there is an urgent need to enhance the United Nations ability to identify and deploy relevant civilian expertise in a timely manner. Effective institution-building requires a complex and diverse mix of skills. Recent experience has made it clear that existing mechanisms for generating such expertise are inadequate. Too often the expertise provided is determined by available supply, rather than identified need. Too often the process of identifying and deploying experts drags on for a year or more. And too often the ad hoc manner of its supply results in a plethora of actors with differing approaches and advice.

If we are truly serious about the United Nations playing a leading role in post-conflict institution-building, there is an urgent need to significantly strengthen the United Nations ability to rapidly identify and deploy appropriately skilled civilian experts. To achieve that, the Secretariat requires greater flexibility to mobilize and utilize existing expertise within the United Nations system. It needs to explore more flexible arrangements for utilizing the resources offered by Member States. We also need to consider how the United Nations can better draw on external pools of relevant civilian expertise, particularly those from the global South. We hope the upcoming report of the review of international civilian capacities will provide concrete suggestions in these areas.

We have much to learn about how post-conflict institution-building is best carried out and much work to do to provide ourselves with the tools necessary to undertake these tasks successfully. But it is vital that we do learn the lessons, both positive and negative, from our collective experiences to date, if we are to meet the goals we have set ourselves in this area.