

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

Statement by H.E. Mr. Moraes Cabral, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely and important debate. It is most suitable that we address this issue under your presidency, given your country's remarkable transition from the post-conflict stage to a stable democracy. I also thank the Secretary-General for his important statement.

I wish to extend a most cordial welcome to Mr. José Luís Guterres, Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, a country that is also a paradigm of today's subject and a success in the United Nations' peacebuilding efforts. Today, less than eight years after its independence, Timor-Leste is a democracy with stable institutions, looking confidently towards the future. That is due to the success of the peacebuilding efforts carried out in Timor-Leste, with institution-building at the centre. But it is mainly due to the will of the Timorese people and their political leaders' vision of national ownership and leadership. Portugal is honoured, alongside the other members of the Portuguese-speaking community, to be deeply associated with the successful path Timor-Leste has followed.

In the early stages of the United Nations reform process, Mozambique and Portugal jointly proposed the creation of a framework within the United Nations system that would help to bridge the gap between security needs and the need to rebuild stable institutions that would allow Governments in post-conflict situations to effectively pursue their main tasks. Without that, stability would be elusive and relapse into conflict would be a serious possibility. In time, that proposal led to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which has been chaired by our colleague Peter Wittig, whom I congratulate on his commitment and leadership. I must say that I share his analysis and suggestions concerning enhancing the role of the PBC.

It is now a common assumption that peacekeeping and peacebuilding should be seen as an integrated effort and no longer as sequential activities, and that peacebuilding activities should begin as soon as the situation on the ground so permits, well within the span of the foreseeable duration of a peacekeeping operation and throughout its cycle.

The United Nations must enhance its capacity to define integrated strategies from the outset and to coordinate the activities of the different actors on the ground — those in charge of security and the development agencies and non-governmental organizations — enhancing interaction with all the relevant stakeholders, including regional and subregional organizations, neighbouring countries, peacebuilding configurations and troop- and police-contributing countries. Much has been done in that sense, but more still needs to be done.

Only with legitimate, credible and resilient institutions will a State be able to discharge its functions and meet the expectations of its citizens. Only such institutions will be able to address the many issues that remain in post-conflict situations and to bring the resolution of political disputes into the political process.

Each country is a different and specific case. General recipes are dangerous, to say the least. But two further elements are common and equally important in all peacebuilding strategies: economic and social development, and national ownership.

Institution-building alone will not suffice, since no country will achieve sustainable peace and stability without economic and social development. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, must be addressed at an early stage of peacebuilding efforts through concrete, focused initiatives. International economic aid should be concentrated on projects that take into account the economic, social and even cultural realities of the country, its specific capacities and the potential they offer for foreign investment. Adequate management of natural resources should also be incorporated early into development programmes and infrastructure reconstruction. Development of national capacities must be a constant objective in all areas.

There is an obvious link between development and peace. The nature of that link is perhaps not totally clear, nor can one build upon a casual relationship between the two. But they are surely mutually reinforcing.

No one can better understand the situation in a country than the people who live there. No foreign

commitment can replace their will, without which no peacebuilding effort will be sustainable. The centrality of national actors is therefore indispensable.

The importance of national ownership in post- conflict peacebuilding is well known to all of us. The partnership between the State and the international partners must be based on a shared strategic understanding of the objectives and the way forward, with clear common goals, permanent and effective dialogue and interaction with the people of the country — the authorities, opposition parties and civil society as a whole. It must include a smooth exit strategy for the international actors. Gender issues and the instrumental role that women play in economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy, expanding the scope of national capacities, are also of particular importance.

Peacebuilding is also an exercise in managing the expectations of the authorities and the civil society of the country in question and those of the mission and other international stakeholders. That can be done only through constant dialogue and through a real grasp of political, social, economic and cultural realities and their dynamics and evolution.

National ownership contributes to institution- building, and, on the other hand, institution-building reinforces national ownership and national responsibility, thus paving the way for a successful exit strategy of the international partners and self-sustained peace and stability.

The European Union has long been committed supporting institutional development in post-confli countries. In that regard, as a member of the European Union, Portugal naturally shares the position that w be expressed by its representative during this debate.

In concluding, I would like to recall an expression of Sergio Vieira de Mello, who personifies United Nations involvement both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Timor-Leste. He said “The UN is an instrument, a frame, an engine, a dynamic, as conciliatory, as innovative, as successful as Member States wish it, allow it and make it be.” That is our common challenge and our shared responsibility. Bearing that in mind, let me assure the Council of Portugal’s commitment to contribute to a more effective and coherent international responsible to post-conflict peacebuilding.