

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding
12 July 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Moraes Cabral, Representative from Portugal

Thank you, Madam President, for presiding over the Council. It is always an honour and a pleasure to have you with us. I would like to congratulate the Colombian presidency of the Council for having organized this important debate. I should also like to thank you, Madam, for the excellent concept note (S/2012/511, annex) that your delegation prepared.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his important statement, as well as our colleagues from Rwanda and Bangladesh for their very useful briefings and for their leadership. I also wish to say a word of appreciation to Mr. Von Amsberg for his presentation.

Portugal naturally shares the positions that will be presented later during this debate by Ambassador Mayr-Harting on behalf of the European Union.

There is no denying that, over the past six years, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has established itself as a unique actor within the United Nations architecture for post-conflict peace consolidation. The report (S/2012/70) we are considering today testifies to that effect and provides a comprehensive account of how the Commission and its various configurations have evolved and developed new forms of engagement with fragile countries, as well as with the wider donor community. Of course, much can still and should be done.

One distinctive aspect of the PBC that Portugal particularly values is the way it brings together security and development as interrelated elements of peace consolidation. Making sure that those two dimensions are treated in an integrated manner from the early stages of peacekeeping requires bringing our political, development, security and humanitarian instruments into a single consistent framework. In each of the countries where it is involved — including in the four configurations that Portugal is a part of — the PBC certainly contributes to the United Nations effort to devise such a framework.

The PBC's singularity derives also from its membership, which brings together Member States and international organizations, and from its engagement with national actors in the definition of peacebuilding priorities. Its approach, based on mutual engagement between the PBC and the authorities of the countries on its agenda, provides a strong incentive for national ownership of peace consolidation processes.

The issue at stake here today is how to make the best use of those singular features of the PBC in order to ensure a more coherent and effective United Nations presence on the ground, but also greater visibility for the PBC's work. As the annual report indicates, one of the PBC's main tasks is the mobilization of donors' resources and the identification of financing gaps and of the priorities for international assistance. Yet, that should translate into the actual work being carried out on the ground. Besides the regular planning and articulation with national authorities, we strongly believe that the PBC should, early on, be more systematically involved with other actors, first and foremost with United Nations agencies, but also with bilateral partners, international financial institutions and regional organizations. By engaging with the different partners, the PBC can play a very important role in bridging potential gaps between what each actor is doing. In that respect, the partnership established with the African Development Bank is a very positive step, which will hopefully yield concrete results in the near future.

Another crucial aspect is that of political dialogue. The statements of mutual agreement, as well as the visits by the Chairs of the country-specific configurations, constitute excellent opportunities for conveying political messages regarding the situation in the countries on the PBC's agenda. Yet, we must admit that more needs to be done to articulate the political role of the PBC configuration Chairs with that of other United Nations actors, namely, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, in order to avoid duplication or, even worse, contradictions.

Priority areas for PBC intervention should also be carefully considered, taking into account the mandate of United Nations missions on the ground. While the current trend for a stronger focus by the PBC configurations on security sector reform (SSR) activities is, in our view, a positive development, it is critical to ensure that such focus does not duplicate the work carried out by United Nations missions whose mandates already include SSR assistance as priority

tasks.

The same applies, to a large extent, to initiatives aimed at promoting the effective participation of women in political transition and economic recovery. We value the initiatives of the PBC to tackle what we believe is a fundamental aspect of peace consolidation in the various countries on its agenda, and can only encourage the different configurations to work with the missions on the ground, as well as with relevant United Nations organs and international partners, to ensure better coordination of existing activities.

Still on the issue of priority areas, we believe that recent debates on cross-national issues, such as the ones on transnational organized crime in West Africa, are very promising and represent an attempt to provide a regional dimension to the work of the PBC. In that respect, we encourage the configurations to work closely with United Nations regional offices in the implementation of concrete projects for combating organized crime.

The answer to the issues I have identified here require a broader reflection on the relation between the PBC and other organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. The PBC's annual report acknowledges some progress in the interaction between the two organs and provides recommendations on how that relationship can be strengthened.

We should work collectively to improve our working methods in order to allow us, on a regular basis, to draw upon the advice of the Chairs of country-specific configurations. The interactive dialogue to be held tomorrow represents a positive step in that direction, but there is certainly room for the Council to seek, and make a better use of, the PBC's advice, especially when discussing the renewal of mandates, but also as an early warning for potential setbacks in peace consolidation in specific countries.

In conclusion, as always, Portugal stands ready to engage in an open and creative discussion on ways to advance the PBC's contributions to more efficient and integrated action on the part of the international community throughout the various stages of post-conflict and peace consolidation in the countries involved. The success of the PBC in fulfilling its functions represents our collective success towards achieving sustainable peace.