

Security Council Open Debate on Security Sector Reform
October 12 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr Cabral, Representative of Portugal

Let me acknowledge your presence here today, Mr. President, as you chair our meeting. I wish to congratulate Nigeria for taking the initiative to promote a debate on such an important element of post-conflict peacebuilding. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous for his presentation.

Allow me to make some comments on Portugal's perspective concerning security sector reform (SSR), based on our own experience in cooperating in peacebuilding efforts in several countries.

First, we see the reform of security institutions as part of a broader process of reconstruction, and in the framework of national dialogue. That broader scope must also involve social and economic development, protection of human rights and consolidation of Government structures, aimed in the end at promoting human security in a broad perspective and through effective citizenship. Ignoring the interlinkage among those various aspects usually undermines the reconstruction efforts of national and international actors and increases the risk of relapse into conflict. In that respect, the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in linking the different elements of peacebuilding, including SSR, is a good practice that should be recognized and encouraged.

Secondly, the number of international actors involved in SSR support initiatives has grown considerably in recent years. The involvement of African regional and subregional organizations, as well as of individual African countries, in initiatives aimed at supporting SSR — for instance, the training of police in Somalia by the African Union Mission in Somalia — is a very positive example of such a trend. Likewise, I would underline the role of the European Union in providing support to security sector reform in several African countries, as well as initiatives of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries in support of SSR in some of its member countries.

As the number of actors providing international assistance to SSR increases, we should guarantee that there is effective coordination among them, mainly to avoid duplication. Also in that respect, the PBC has contributed to ensuring a degree of articulation and identifying and promoting synergies among various initiatives. It is also important that the United Nations maintain a leading role in the coordination of international efforts.

A third aspect that I wish to underline is that security sector reform is a long-term process based on national strategies and on the political will of the authorities to sustain the new institutions over the long run. But implementation of reform cannot be achieved without the necessary resources. We should be very clear about that point. In many situations, SSR strategies will stall if they are not properly matched by the active engagement of the international community. In those situations, it will prove very hard for countries to individually undertake what is necessarily a difficult process. We could mention here the case of Guinea Bissau, where the authorities have committed themselves to an SSR strategy that

requires the commitment of international partners in the implementation of key aspects of the strategy.

Fourthly, let me refer to the great importance of the promotion of justice as a cornerstone of SSR. While the military and the police are crucial for peace consolidation, one should not overlook the decisive importance of a functional and effective judicial system as a central element for ensuring respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, the fight against impunity and the development of a functioning economy.

Investment in SSR is also a fundamental measure to tackle organized crime, in particular trafficking in arms and drugs, which is a great challenge in some of the countries emerging from conflict in Africa. As Portugal has repeatedly stated, fighting organized crime requires strong national security intuitions. But it also requires enhanced regional cooperation, mainly to ensure that success in one individual country does not create additional risks for neighbouring States.

Finally, we should bear in mind that security sector reform is usually part of a reconciliation process in societies divided by recent conflict dynamics. Often it involves searching for national consensus on the foundations of the State, including on constitutional reform. International support to SSR should, to the extent possible, promote an inclusive approach to the creation of new institutions by bringing to the fore perspectives of the various groups and communities that may contribute to the process, including women. Such an effort will certainly enhance the legitimacy of institutions as well as the resilience of post-conflict societies.