

Working Better Together: Implementing the High Level Panel's  
Recommendations on Peacebuilding

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I. In its analysis of the United Nations capacity to promote and maintain peace, the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change identified

"...a key institutional gap: there is no place in the United Nations system explicitly designed to avoid State collapse and the slide to war or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace. That this was not included in the Charter of the United Nations is no surprise since the work of the United Nations in largely internal conflicts is fairly recent. But today, in an era when dozens of States are under stress of recovering from conflict, there is a clear international obligation to assist States in developing their capacity to perform their sovereign functions effectively and responsibly ...Strengthening the United Nations capacity for peacebuilding in the widest sense must be a priority for the organization." (p. 83).<sup>1</sup>

There is by now ample evidence of substantial gaps in the planning, financing and implementation capacities for the critical civilian components of complex missions. While substantial improvements have been made over the years in the international community's peacebuilding capacities, concepts, policies and practice continue to evolve within the UN system, including the international financial institutions, and among bilateral donors. In proposing the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission and related Peacebuilding Support Office in the Secretariat, the High Level Panel is seeking to build on and consolidate these advances in order to strengthen national as well as the UN's and international community's shared capacity to prevent state failure and more effectively manage post-conflict peacebuilding.

The Peacebuilding Commission (together with the PBSO) is intended to create an authoritative, intergovernmental mechanism that can make the substantive link between diplomatic, security and development functions and ensure that for each specific country situation a comprehensive, integrated mission plan is followed, that there is adequate coordination among the diverse

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<sup>1</sup> A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility, Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, December 2004.

intergovernmental and national donor agencies, and that sufficient resources are marshaled to ensure that the bases for sustainable peace and development are put in place. How to make this work in practice is the subject of this paper.

II. Consistent with the HLP's focus on the centrality of responsible and effective states to ensure peace and security, there has been increased attention in recent years to institutional frameworks for setting policy and delivering outcomes, both among donor nations and in intergovernmental organizations. Various UN departments, programs and specialized agencies have worked hard to develop their individual civilian response capacities, as have the Bretton Woods institutions, and some regional organizations.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing their own civilian response shortcomings, bilateral donors, most evidently the United Kingdom and the United States, have developed their own national-level policy planning and coordinating bodies to more effectively address issues of post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding, and to these same ends other European donors are seeking ways to build flexibility into their funding lines for relief and development.

These efforts at national-level coordination and resource mobilization are milestones in the recognition of the importance of engaging fully and effectively in conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding. However, they also signal the additional importance of developing an effective international or inter-governmental mechanism, such as the HLP's proposed Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office at the UN, for at least two reasons:

First, there is a clear need to increase coverage beyond the limited capacities of individual governments or IGOs. By most counts, more than 50 civil wars have been terminated since 1989;<sup>3</sup> yet, the UN mounted Security-Council mandated peacebuilding operations in only twenty-one, or less than half of these, as well as in Afghanistan and East Timor, and the U.S. was involved in less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup>, not counting Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, over the past five years, there has been an average of 15 conflicts occurring concurrently, with U.S. aspirations limited to addressing at best two-three of these simultaneously. Under these circumstances, the vast majority of post-conflict cases will continue to fall into the category of forgotten or neglected crises with increased risk of a reversion to

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<sup>2</sup> See Forman, et al, papers prepared for the Copenhagen Conference on Civilian Crisis Management, June 8-9, 2004, at [www.cic.nyu.edu/publications](http://www.cic.nyu.edu/publications).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Call uses this measure in his recent review of peacebuilding concepts and capacities for DPA.

conflict. Given the mobility of global terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and organized crime, triage among these pockets of instability will not provide a certain enough safeguard against these threats to international peace and security.

Secondly, even in those situations that the international community decides to act, there is a risk that increased national capacities among a few better endowed or motivated countries, conflated with national interest calculi and impatience with less agile or competent partners, will lead to further fragmentation in the international response, resulting in a possibly more robust but partial and uncoordinated response that will be less effective than a strategically calibrated one.. Competing mandates and interests have plagued post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the past, with agencies butting heads in the pursuit of roles and resources and governments seeking to “brand” projects that might justify expenditures to their citizens. Even as individual governments and IGOs seek to improve their performance, there is an undeniable need to pull together the diverse national and intergovernmental efforts to maximize the individual capacities of cooperating agencies; to reduce redundancies and competition and establish an effective division of labor; and to marshal sufficient resources to get the job done in a timely manner. The much maligned word, “coordination” aside, there is mounting evidence that multilateral cooperation and burden-sharing produce better outcomes.

III. The UN has a critical role to play in this regard, in part because of the particular comparative advantage it brings to the table. Its universal membership, impartiality, and multinational staff provide it with a degree of legitimacy and credibility unmatched by any regional organization, the Bretton Woods Institutions, or bilateral donors. Moreover, in the course of the past quarter-century, the UN has gathered considerable experience and expertise in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, often through reflection on its own shortcomings and failings. Finally, as James Dobbins has pointed out in his recent assessment of the post-conflict effectiveness of the UN and the United States, the UN has performed rather remarkably well in extremely difficult circumstances. Dobbins attributes success to seven out of eight UN led-cases and only four out of eight U.S. led cases, despite the fact that UN operations tend to be understaffed and under-resourced. To quote Dobbins,

“Assuming adequate consensus among Security Council members on the purpose for any intervention, the United Nations provides the most suitable institutional framework for most

nation-building missions, one with a comparatively low cost structure, a comparatively high success rate, and the greatest degree of international legitimacy.”<sup>4</sup>

IV. These relative assessments notwithstanding, UN capacity is extremely incomplete and uneven.<sup>5</sup> Despite advances made by unifying its field presence in a single “house,” by the establishment of country teams, and by the deployment of integrated missions, the effectiveness of the UN response to complex crises continues to be weakened by incoherent and overlapping planning and funding appeals, and by competing mandates and agendas of multiple agencies and programs. For its part, the Security-Council sets mission mandates on a somewhat myopic basis – normally six months to a year – with a focus on political settlement and elections as the precondition for early exit, often leaving unattended the conditions that gave rise to conflict in the first place. There is little consultation with the development side of the system, either with the programs and agencies, including UNDG, with the IFIs, or with NGOs, let alone with donor government development or finance ministries. The donors themselves often fail to coordinate, and sometime disagree on, the political objectives at hand and the strategies for achieving them. And, there is continued lack of funding for the essential state-building functions that need to occur within the first year to eighteen months of peacebuilding. The proposed Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund represent innovative and promising mechanisms to address these problems.

V. While there appears to be growing consensus about the need for a more effective mechanism for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, the guidelines laid out by the High Level Panel raise a number of critical questions about form, function and decision-making authority that must be resolved before any decisive action on the Peacebuilding Commission and associated Peacebuilding Support Office can be taken.

In brief, the High Level Panel recommends that:

“The Peacebuilding Commission should be reasonably small; it should meet in different configurations, to consider both general policy issues and country-by-country strategies; it should be chaired for at least one year ...by a member approved by the Security Council; in addition to representation from the Security Council it should include representation from the Economic and Social Council; national representatives of the country under consideration should be invited to attend; the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, the President of the World Bank and, when appropriate, heads of the regional development banks should be represented at its meetings by appropriate senior officials; representatives of the principal donor countries and, when

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<sup>4</sup> Ftnt. Dobbins...

<sup>5</sup> This is true throughout the system. See aforementioned Copenhagen papers for a detailed assessment of the civilian response capacities of the UN Secretariat, the specialized agencies and programmes, the IFIs, and the EU.

appropriate, the principal troop contributors should be invited to participate in its deliberations; and representatives of regional and subregional organizations should be invited to participate in its deliberations when such organizations are actively involved in the country in question.” (XV.265, p.84).

Elsewhere, I have laid out the implementation issues that need to be resolved by Member States in the run up to the forthcoming Summit at which it is hoped that agreement can be reached on establishing the Peacebuilding Commission and endorsing the Secretary-General’s plans for a Peacebuilding Support Office in the Secretariat.<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I want to argue four basic points: **1) Function should determine form; 2) Field vs. headquarters capacity and coordination is a false choice; 3) The funding gap must be finally closed; and 4) The debate on institutional locus can be resolved on substantive grounds.**

**1. Function should determine form.** In his Note to the General Assembly transmitting the report of the High Level Panel, the Secretary-General endorses the Panel’s recommendation to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, and states that:

“...work and resources in this area remain too dispersed and I welcome the idea of a new intergovernmental body, as well as that of dedicated capacity in the Secretariat. It is my hope that such a Commission, which would assist States in the transition from the immediate post-conflict phase to longer-term reconstruction and development, would also be available, at their request, to assist Member States in strengthening their own capacity.” (paragraph 14, page 3).

As described in the Panel’s report, the Peacebuilding Commission is intended to enhance the security-bound planning, implementation and monitoring capacity of the Security Council/Secretariat, by ensuring simultaneity of critical peacebuilding tasks. By bringing together members of the Security Council, ECOSOC, the International Financial Institutions and major donors, it would help to link at headquarters the diplomatic, security and development dimensions of complex missions, thereby providing greater support capacity for field operations. It would enable the Security Council to draw in a consistent and systematic way on the knowledge, experience and resources of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the development ministries of Member States, all present in the field but not readily a part of Security Council deliberations.

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<sup>6</sup> See Discussion Paper on the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change “Recommendation to Establish a Peacebuilding Commission”, prepared for the January 17, 2005 meeting hosted by the Governments of Denmark and Tanzania.

In his own March report (drawing on the HLP), the Secretary-General states that the

“Peacebuilding Commission could perform the following functions: in the immediate aftermath of war, improve United Nations planning for sustained recovery, focusing on early efforts to establish the necessary institutions; help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities, in part by providing an overview of assessed, voluntary and standing funding mechanisms; improve the coordination of the many post-conflict activities of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies; provide a forum in which the United Nations, major bilateral donors, troop contributors, relevant regional actors and organizations, the international financial institutions and the national or transitional Government of the country concerned can share information about their respective post-conflict recovery strategies, in the interests of greater coherence; periodically review progress towards medium-term recovery goals; and extend the period of political attention to post—conflict recovery.” Pp-32-33.

Beyond these process functions, and implicit in both reports, is the explicit end-goal of any post-conflict reconstruction or peacebuilding effort: to wit, the restoration or development of effective and legitimate public institutions capable of exercising control over the legitimate use of force and providing essential goods and services to the populations that live within their defined borders.<sup>7</sup> The Peacebuilding Commission needs to be constituted with this goal and the expertise necessary to achieve it firmly in mind.

There are a host of “to do” lists associated with post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. However, these tend to be task-oriented rather than strategically-driven and need to be prioritized and sequenced to the demands and realities of the particular post-conflict and political circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Defining the required civilian skills and resources in technical categories related to reconstruction and peacebuilding – infrastructure, transitional security, rule of law, humanitarian assistance, and economic development – misses the analytical framework and integrated approach to statebuilding that provides the only real basis for longer term stability. Concepts such as governance and participation get us closer to that goal, but the approach is usually limited to “strengthening civil society” and holding elections. Building legitimate and effective institutions for public administration, management and finance, are essential to winning

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<sup>7</sup> In his March report, *In Larger Freedom: toward development, security and human rights for all*, the Secretary-General notes that “The proposals... are designed to strengthen States and enable them to serve their peoples better by working together on the basis of shared principles and priorities... one of the great challenges of th new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face.” Un Document A/59/2005, p. 6

<sup>8</sup> In an unpublished paper, “Building Institutions After Conflict”, Sarah Cliffe and Nick Manning, of the World Bank, cite public safety and security, rule of law, economic planning and public finance management, and service delivery as the first order of business.

public trust and averting (a return to) conflict. Multiple actors with relevant competencies are essential to getting this right.

These functions pertain by and large to instances of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, leaving open the critical question of the role to be played by the Peacebuilding Commission with regard to prevention and, in particular, countries at risk, a role initially envisioned by the High Level Panel. In his transmittal letter conveying the Panel's report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General recognized that the wherewithal to help build capacity in post-conflict countries could have dual use for conflict prevention, but stipulated that this should be at the request of the countries in question. In his recently released supplemental report, he sharpens his view, stating

“I do not believe such a body should have an early warning or monitoring function, but it would be valuable if Member States could at any stage make use of the Peacebuilding Commission's advice and could request assistance from a standing fund for peacebuilding to build their domestic institutions for reducing conflict, including through strengthening the rule of law institutions.” Para 115 , P. 32

While this should successfully elide some states' concerns regarding sovereignty and intervention by asserting the responsive nature of the Peacebuilding Commission's role in conflict prevention, considerably more thought needs to be given to the means and methods of addressing the needs of fragile states and questions of impending state failure.

**2. Field vs. headquarters capacity and coordination is a false choice.** There is no question but that conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding need to be field driven and consistent with national goals and aspirations if they are to have any traction. However, significant back up support at headquarters is essential to the success of any field mission. There appears to be general recognition of the need for an authoritative body to guide policy, set standards, bring development and security together with the politics of the moment, share experiences and best practices among diverse actors, maintain a sustained focus on post-conflict requirements, provide coherence in specific country cases, oversee and monitor progress in transition strategies and operations, flag problems, marshal resources, and track commitments and disbursements.

Reflecting the need for both a strong field orientation and comprehensive back-up, the Peacebuilding Commission should consist of a core group and country (or region) specific sub-groups based on an organizing principle of variable geometry. As stipulated by the Secretary-General in his March report, the

composition of the core group must be shaped in relation to its ability to provide coordination and advice of sufficient scope and magnitude to define a peacebuilding strategy and devise general policies and procedures. It therefore should include representation from the UN system as a whole, including the Security Council, ECOSOC, bilateral donors, and major troop contributors, as well as by senior officials of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although not stipulated in the Panel's report or subsequent documents, additional consideration should be given – at the discretion of the Secretary-General – to representation by the UN funds and programmes, perhaps through participation by the Chair of the UN Development Group (UNDG).

To accommodate the issues of appropriate participation, effective size, and legitimacy, it would be important to supplement the Commission's core group, charged with the general tasks of policy and oversight previously described, with sub-groups that could be convened to attend to specific country situations on a case-by-case basis. Participation in these sub-groups, or committees, should consist of: senior representation from the country under consideration; the SRSG or his/her senior designee for peacebuilding and coordination; senior officials of relevant regional and sub-regional organizations; regional actors involved in the peacebuilding strategy, as appropriate; country directors of the World Bank and IMF and a senior official of the relevant regional development bank; representatives of major donors to that country, and troop contributing countries.

A number of recommendations have been put forward regarding means of selecting membership and participation in both core and sub-groups, and I will not attempt to summarize or advocate for any of them here. Each requires trade offs between size and breadth of participation which in turn have consequences with respect to institutional politics and questions of legitimacy. Whatever selection criteria are ultimately chosen, however, two things need to be kept clearly in mind. First, representation and membership are different forms of participation and carry with them implications for quality of participation and decision-making. Secondly, and closely related, is the need to distinguish between legitimacy that is derived from participation and the legitimacy that is derived from effective results.<sup>9</sup>

To be truly effective, the Peacebuilding Commission would need to be accompanied by concomitant reforms within the Secretariat, as clearly identified

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<sup>9</sup> In *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World* (2002, p.234) Keohane posits that legitimacy has two components and that international institutions are judged both on the procedures they follow (inputs) and on the results they obtain (outputs).

in the HLP recommendation to create a Peacebuilding Support Office. As previously noted, there is a definite need to address the current state of competence and capacity within the UN, both in terms of human resources and organizational structure by bringing together experienced and specialized staff who are now dispersed throughout the system, in an institutional arrangement that provides one-stop shopping for analysis, planning and support for peacebuilding missions. As in the case of the Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office would provide a support function to the field, initially working closely with UN country team, to lay the groundwork for the SRSG or Special Representative. It would also work in close cooperation with DPKO (normally the lead planning department) to provide coordinated backstopping at headquarters for on-going field operations, including advice on best practices, access to technical expertise through maintenance of rosters in essential areas of peacebuilding, and serve as a resource for the Peacebuilding Commission.

**3. Yes, there is a funding gap which must finally be closed.** The High Level Panel recommended the establishment of a \$250 million Peacebuilding Fund to ensure adequate and timely funding of the essential civilian components of a lasting and sustainable peace. While the modalities for the use of funds and for its replenishment need to be negotiated, there is general agreement that timely and predictable funding is needed for: a) the costs of early recovery and rehabilitation, b) financing essential public sector activities until self-sustaining revenues can be generated, and c) initial economic pump-priming, including job recovery and agricultural production, until mainstream development financing and private sector investment come on board.<sup>10</sup> There is also accumulating evidence that the economic costs of internal conflict make an ounce of prevention more than worth a pound of cure.<sup>11</sup>

For more than a decade now, efforts have been made to address the well-documented relief to development gap in post-conflict financing. In an effort to close that gap, a number of donor countries have built flexibility into their accounts for humanitarian assistance and development; the CAP has been extended; UNDP has established both the BCPR Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery as well as country-specific trust funds; and the World Bank has created a Post-Conflict Fund, following on its experimentation with the Holst Fund for recurring cost of the Palestine Authority. In some cases, such as that of East Timor, the Security-Council included some additional activities as part of assessed funding. These innovative efforts notwithstanding, serious gaps

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<sup>10</sup> The timeframe for “gap” funding is variably considered to be between 6-18 months.

<sup>11</sup> See Collier....

continue to hamper efforts at reintegration of former combatants and displaced persons, training and deployment of indigenous police forces, judicial reform, recurrent costs of fledging government services, and other essential civil institution-building elements of peacebuilding.

In his March report, the Secretary-General suggests that one role for the Peacebuilding Commission would be to help "...ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities, in part by providing an overview of assessed, voluntary and standing funding mechanisms." (P.31) While there is compelling reason to front load these essential national capacity-building activities in post-conflict countries, it is unlikely that many of them will ever become part of assessed budgets, as in the case of the "dd" but not the "r" of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Moreover, others would argue that there is a certain risk in securitizing the entire peacebuilding enterprise. Still, as in the Albright corollary to the Powell doctrine for the overwhelming use of force, it is reasonable to ask what good is it to have the system in place to devise comprehensive strategies if you cannot pay for their implementation?

Presuming that the argument for creation of a Peacebuilding Fund is now compelling, a number of issues remain to be decided, including modalities for its establishment, replenishment, and use. The Fund could be set up either as a standing fund to be replenished on a periodic basis by willing donors, as a revolving fund to be used as an advance account to be repaid as pledges for country activities are realized, or as a draw-down facility whose pre-pledged funds would be released upon approval by the Peacebuilding Commission of a plan of action based on a joint, field-based assessment. In either case, the Peacebuilding Commission should have authority over country allocations based on an acceptable, field-derived coherent plan of action. Peacebuilding funds should be put as quickly as possible at the disposal of field operations, either directly through the SRSG, the Resident Coordinator or, where there is sufficient confidence, national authorities as a first demonstration of their capacity to deliver public goods and services.<sup>12</sup> At the very least, procedures for accessing trust funds held at headquarters need to be streamlined. Under any scenario, a system for full accountability from recipients as well as from donors needs to accompany the established of any funding mechanism.

#### **4. The debate on institutional locus can be resolved on substantive grounds.**

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<sup>12</sup> Note Collier's point that national public expenditures for military are not best use of aid which is better apportioned for purposes of economic growth.

The High Level Panel has recommended that the Peacebuilding Commission be established as a subsidiary body of the Security Council, after consultation with ECOSOC, thereby raising a set of questions about the relationship between the two bodies. In his March report, the Secretary-General notes that the Peacebuilding Commission "...would best combine efficiency with legitimacy if it were to report to the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in sequence, depending on the phase of the conflict. Simultaneous reporting lines should be avoided because they will create duplication and confusion." (Para 116, p 32)

While fully agreeing with the point of simultaneous reporting, I would urge that we substitute "state of recovery" for "phase of conflict." If we can agree that restoring or building legitimate and effective state institutions is the sine-qua-non of successful peacebuilding then we should be able to agree to front-load those components that are necessary corollaries of peace and security into Security Council mission mandates. When public institutions are again operating normally and able to provide for public safety, security and well-being in an atmosphere of relative peace, ECOSOC would be able to assume its role consistent with the Charter's allocation of responsibilities as between competent bodies. The Peacebuilding Commission, comprised of members of both the Security Council and ECOSOC would provide for appropriate consultation in the restoration of those public functions.

A number of additional considerations argue for a first association with the Security Council, including: the political weight and authority afforded by the Security Council; the simultaneity needed between peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations; the required coordination across phases of conflict – prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding; and the need to inform security considerations with longer-term development goals. The economic and social bodies in the UN system have perspectives, expertise, experience, and resources that need to be included from the outset in fashioning, implementing and monitoring comprehensive post-conflict peacebuilding strategies that for their part must become a central part of the definition of peace and security.

VI. Conclusions. The international community has been working its way incrementally toward the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission since the UN became seized with post-conflict reconstruction and recovery nearly two decades ago. The process has had its fits and starts, but the logic of the outcome has been clear for some time. Obviously, the idea of the Peacebuilding Commission is itself not the answer to the travails of building sustained peace

and development through effective, legitimate and accountable states. It is necessary to get the functions, structures, decision-making rules right, and it is essential that the human resource capacity and financial wherewithal be firmly in place. The High Level Panel report has provided a much-needed catalyst to the process of reforming not simply the United Nations but the way in which the broader international community – donors, IFIs, regional organizations, NGOs -- organizes itself to ensure that fragile states do not slide into conflict and that states in conflict recover sufficiently to manage their own sustainable peace. The Secretary-General's just released March report takes us one step further toward implementation of three unassailable recommendations: the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, a Peacebuilding Support Office within the Secretariat, and a Peacebuilding Fund. We must not squander this opportunity to work better together to prevent conflict and restore peace.