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29 December 2004

TO: Mr. Kieran Prendergast

Please find attached copy of a letter (undated) addressed to the Secretary-General from The Peacebuilding Forum 2004, along with their document entitled "Building Effective Partnerships". It appears the letter has been copied both to you and to Mr. Malloch Brown.

It would be appreciated if DPA would review the document and prepare a draft response for the SG's signature in consultation with Mr. Malloch Brown.

Thank you and kind regards.



Yohannes Mengesha  
Officer-in-Charge  
Office of the Deputy Secretary-General

cc: Mr. Malloch Brown

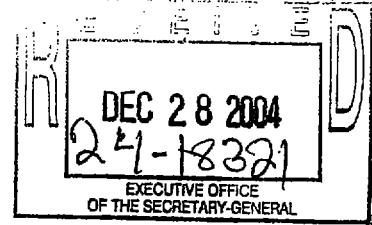
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THE PEACEBUILDING  
FORUM 2004



**H.E. Mr. Kofi A. Annan**  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
New York

Copy:

**Sir Kieran Prendergast**, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Convener of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS)

**Mark Malloch-Brown**, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Chair of the Executive Committee of the UN Development Group (UNDG)

Helsinki and Geneva, 10 December 2004

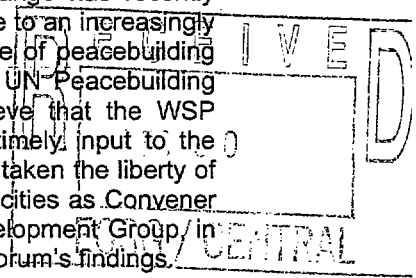
Mr. Secretary-General,

We are honoured to present to you, for your consideration, the enclosed Peacebuilding Forum Document and its ten recommendations on building more effective partnerships between internal and external actors in post-conflict countries. The findings and recommendations contained in the document were strongly endorsed at the concluding Peacebuilding Forum conference in New York on 7 October 2004, an event that we had the pleasure of co-Chairing. We would also like to convey our gratitude to you for sending your representative, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast, to provide opening remarks at the conference.

The enclosed Conference Document summarizes the findings of a broad and richly substantive process of consultation and exchange between the two main driving forces for peacebuilding. The first, and most important, is the diverse collection of local, national, governmental and non-state actors from post-conflict countries who have the primary responsibility for rebuilding fractured societies from within (hereafter referred to as 'internal actors'). The second are the representatives of bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies that organize and support peacebuilding strategies and approaches around the world (hereafter referred to as 'external actors').

The Peacebuilding Forum draws attention to the difficult relationship between these two large, varied and often uncoordinated groups, attempting in small ways to introduce a new angle on questions that have plagued many peacebuilding efforts over the last decade. Most notably, the Peacebuilding Forum has sought to give equal voice to those at the receiving end of international assistance. The Conference Document concludes with a series of ten recommendations that, it is hoped, can make a contribution to addressing certain shortcomings in the common effort of internal and external actors to set war-torn countries on a secure path to peace. We are most pleased to note that a number of these recommendations are already moving to implementation by the designated agencies and organizations.

Mr. Secretary-General, your High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change has recently presented its report providing insights on ways to strengthen our common response to an increasingly volatile world. The Panel's report places an important emphasis on the challenge of peacebuilding and recommends the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission and a UN Peacebuilding Support Office to coordinate and monitor such work. In this context we believe that the WSP International/IPA Peacebuilding Forum Conference Document is a particularly timely input to the discussions now unfolding and to the follow-up on the HLP Report. We have thus taken the liberty of copying Sir Kieran Prendergast and Mark Malloch Brown, in their respective capacities as Convener of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and as Chair of the UN Development Group, in the hope that they will draw the attention of their colleagues to the Peacebuilding Forum's findings.



We hope that this document will help to inspire a new way of looking at the challenge of building effective partnerships between internal and external actors in post-conflict situations. We believe that the United Nations can benefit from the insights of the Peacebuilding Forum process and remain at your disposal to assist you and the UN in considering its implications on improving peacebuilding policy and operational practice.

Most respectfully,



President Martti Ahtisaari



Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun



International Peace Academy



THE PEACEBUILDING  
FORUM 2004

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## **BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL  
ACTORS IN POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES

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New York, 7 October 2004

organized by WSP International and  
IPA's Security-Development Nexus Program

**PEACEBUILDING FORUM CONFERENCE**

**FINAL DOCUMENT**



International Peace Academy



## Foreword

We have the honour to present the Peacebuilding Forum Final Conference Document, entitled *Building Effective Partnerships – Improving the Relationship between Internal and External Actors in Post-Conflict Countries*. This document was first presented in draft form to the Peacebuilding Forum Conference which took place in New York on 7 October 2004. This final version incorporates the comments of the conference participants and benefits from their strong endorsement.

The conference document is structured in two parts. Part 1 summarises the analysis of the key issues as debated over the past year by the contributors to the Peacebuilding Forum process. Part 2 presents ten proposals for better peacebuilding practice, selected according to the criteria presented in paragraph 37. These address practical issues and problems that require urgent attention by both internal and external actors in post-conflict countries.

The Peacebuilding Forum process has been a collaborative effort of WSP International and the International Peace Academy. Special thanks go to Tore Rose, who has skilfully led the process as its Team Leader, and to the staff from both institutions for their hard work in bringing us to this point. Our special gratitude is extended to the donors that supported this initiative and to all those contributors to the process who have been so generous with their insights, wisdom and knowledge. But it is, of course, to the people struggling to rebuild their lives and societies in the aftermath of war that we respectfully dedicate this work.

It is our sincere hope that the issues, insights and recommendations contained in the attached document will inspire others to take concrete measures to improve our common approach to rebuilding war-torn societies.

Matthias Stiefel  
Executive Director, WSP International

Neclá Tschirgi  
Acting President, International Peace  
Academy

**This document is the result of a one-year process of reflection and consultations enriched by the following:**

**Virtual Brainstorming Group, August–September 2003:** 12 peacebuilding practitioners contributed their views on what constituted the major stumbling blocks to effective partnerships in post-conflict rebuilding. An Issues Paper arose from this first brainstorming.

**Brainstorming Roundtable, October 2003:** 19 participants discussed the most appropriate concept and format for the Forum and critically examined the initial document, deepening and sharpening the principal issues.

**Country Surveys, February–April 2004:** 12 national and international researchers talked to nearly 400 internal and external actors in Afghanistan, Guatemala, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka through one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and broader consultations. The results were compiled in written reports and provided input for the revision of the Issues Paper.

**First Preparatory Meeting, Villars-sur-Ollon, Switzerland, 24–27 May 2004:** The first substantive event of the Peacebuilding Forum brought together some 50 participants representing in equal numbers those on the “giving” and “receiving” ends of post-conflict assistance, who devoted three and a half days of focused discussions to the theme of the Forum and came up with a number of specific recommendations. The following background papers were prepared for the Villars meeting: Peacebuilding Forum Issues Paper; “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Assessing International Efforts”; and “Let Local Actors Take the Lead”.

**Second Preparatory Meeting, New York, 8 June 2004:** The aim of this second substantive event was to present the Peacebuilding Forum to representatives of different organizations within and outside the United Nations based in New York or elsewhere in the Americas, and to consult them on the recommendations tabled during previous events.

**Peacebuilding Forum Conference, New York, 7 October 2004:** This was the concluding conference of the Peacebuilding Forum process where the findings and 10 draft recommendations were discussed and endorsed by the participants. The Conference was Co-Chaired by President Martti Ahtisaari and Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun and opened with introductory remarks of the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, delivered by Sir Kieran Prendergast, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

WSP International would like to thank all those who contributed to the preparation of this document, in particular Neclá Tschirgi, Agnès Hurwitz and Francesco Mancini from IPA, Scott Weber from WSP International as well as Nahla Haidar, Tore Rose, Glauca Yoshiura Boyer and Laurie Nathan from the PBF team. We also wish to express our profound gratitude for the generous financial support of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre (Canada). IPA’s Security-Development Nexus Program is grateful to the Governments of Australia, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway and the United Kingdom as well as the Rockefeller Foundation for their support.

## Executive Summary

1. Difficulties in achieving the delicate balance between genuine national ownership and effective partnerships between internal and external actors continue to plague recovery efforts and the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding processes.
2. Cast within a larger effort to improve peacebuilding approaches and capacities, the Peacebuilding Forum was launched by WSP International, with the support of the International Peace Academy, to propose ways to improve the relationship between internal and external actors in post-conflict countries. The outcomes of this year-long process were presented to the Peacebuilding Forum Conference in New York on 7 October 2004 for endorsement in the form of specific recommendations.
3. The Forum's broad consultations with peacebuilding practitioners from post-conflict countries and the international assistance community revealed two main issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the relationship between internal and external actors: the disparity between good peacebuilding policies and the unchanged reality on the ground, and the poor quality of dialogue between internal and external actors in post-conflict situations.
4. A distinguishing feature of the Forum process is that it has, at all stages, given equal voice to those from fragile and conflict countries who have been at the receiving end of peacebuilding assistance from the international community. This included country surveys carried out by locally hired consultants, which documented the concrete experiences of both internal and external actors in five post-conflict settings.
5. It is evidently hard to give practical meaning to national leadership and ownership of recovery processes, even with the best of intentions on the part of external actors. This is particularly difficult in light of the great imbalance of power in the relationship between internal and external actors, the fractured nature of post-conflict societies, the diverse interests at play and the urgency with which policy decisions need to be taken.
6. There are recurring issues of legitimacy and accountability for both internal and external actors, which must be recognized and dealt with.
7. The importance the international community attaches to this problem is reflected, *inter alia*, in the open meeting of the UN Security Council on Civilian Aspects of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding on 22 September 2004, as well as in the ongoing discussions in the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the UN Executive Committees, and the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. It is also reflected in the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development initiative.
8. Several bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, regional and international organizations, research institutions, and NGOs are involved in reviewing peacebuilding policy and practice. Various conferences, meetings, and workshops have generated concrete initiatives, proposals and recommendations to reform existing institutions, to strengthen peacebuilding capacities and coordination frameworks, and to improve funding mechanisms. The Forum has drawn on the work of others, while approaching the issues from the particular perspective of the internal-external actor relationship.
9. The Forum process has yielded analysis in Part I of this document, and recommendations in Part II which seek to address some of the principal problems identified. These recommendations are summarized as follows:



**Recommendations 1 and 2** suggest the adoption of assessed budgets and more specific political oversight of UN-mandated peacebuilding.

**Recommendation 3** addresses capacities for promoting national dialogue and legitimate priority-setting processes in post-conflict countries.

**Recommendation 4** suggests how to promote greater exchange of experience between internal actors in post-conflict countries.

**Recommendation 5** suggests that internal actors also meet more regularly with donors in the context of the OECD/DAC's Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation Network (CPDC).

**Recommendation 6** suggests how external actors can engage in dialogue with elected representatives in post-conflict countries so as to deepen mutual accountability.

**Recommendation 7** seeks to strengthen the exchange mentioned in recommendation 6 through national evaluation capacities in post-conflict countries.

**Recommendation 8** addresses the need to better disseminate good practice guidelines to operational personnel, both external and internal.

**Recommendation 9** addresses training in attitudes and process skills prior to international assignments.

**Recommendation 10** suggests that in-country training be given by nationals in post-conflict countries.

## **Part I. The relationship between internal and external actors in post-conflict countries**

### **A) Introduction**

1. In September 2003 WSP International launched the Peacebuilding Forum on *Building Effective Partnerships: Improving the Relationship between Internal and External Actors in Post-Conflict Countries*. In May 2004 the International Peace Academy joined the process. The aim of the Forum was to deepen understanding of the difficulties in the relationship between internal and external actors and to explore practical ways to make their interaction more effective and therefore more beneficial to fragile and post-conflict societies. Over the past year several consultations took place with peacebuilding practitioners and policy makers from a wide range of organizations and post-conflict countries.

2. Surveys were commissioned to get insiders' views of how internal and external actors interrelate in the context of peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, Guatemala, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> Senior officials in governments and international agencies were consulted, as were practitioners from non-governmental organizations and civil society.

3. The Forum was a continuation of the "Bossey process" which WSP International's predecessor, the War-torn Societies Project (WSP), convened in 1998 to draw operational lessons for bilateral and multilateral assistance actors based on WSP's experience in Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala and Puntland, Somalia. Much additional experience in peacebuilding has been gained by a range of organizations since then. Nevertheless most observers, in both the international community and the countries concerned, feel that there remains a frustrating disparity between the policy and practice of external actors in post-conflict situations. In that context, the large number of fragile and conflict-affected countries that relapse into violence, the staggering human costs of war and instability, and the spiralling financial demands on the international community give urgency to the Forum process.

4. The Peacebuilding Forum focused on the critical period for a war-torn country or region when widespread and violent conflict has ended, basic security has been restored and the hard work of rebuilding trust and the foundations of a stable society begins.

5. In recent years major external actors have sought to improve peacebuilding policy and strategy through institutional reviews, the preparation of guidelines, and high-level initiatives. Of particular importance to the Forum is the opportunity to make a modest contribution to the implementation of recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which is expected to re-commit the UN to its peacebuilding agenda.

6. The Forum process was informed by important initiatives within several organizations:

- *United Nations*

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance (ECHA) work on Transition Issues; and the follow-up to the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report);

- *European Union*

Efforts to strengthen its civilian crisis management capacities; and the governance aspects of the ACP-EU Agreement signed on 23 June 2000 in Cotonou;

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<sup>1</sup> The survey reports are available on the WSP International website, [www.wsp-international.org](http://www.wsp-international.org). The results of the surveys were synthesized and reviewed in a background paper entitled "Internal and External Actors and the Quality of their Dialogue in Post-conflict Countries" which was prepared for the Peacebuilding Forum Conference.

- *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC)*  
The work of its network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation (CPDC) in following up the DAC Guidelines on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict, in carrying out its Learning and Advisory Process on Difficult Partnerships (LAP) and in its efforts to harmonize donor practices in conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- *African Union*  
Especially its emerging Peace and Security Council and work within the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD);
- *Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International IDEA*  
These organizations are collaborating in the preparation of a Dialogue handbook for policy makers and practitioners;
- *World Bank*  
The Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) programme and the work undertaken within the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (CPR);
- *Major bilateral donors*  
Denmark's initiative to host the Copenhagen High-level Seminar on Civilian Crisis Management, 8 and 9 June 2004. Input was also drawn from the report of the Utstein Group (Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom) examining the coherence of their peacebuilding projects and resulting, *inter alia*, in Norway's new Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding.

7. Building upon this growing body of international experience and knowledge, the Peacebuilding Forum examined one critical piece of a larger puzzle. Drawing on varied field experiences, intensive consultations, and country surveys, the Forum sought new perspectives on old problems by focusing in a practical way on several thorny but fundamental issues: national ownership, empowering partnerships, quality dialogues, and the gap between policy and practice on the ground. The Forum's distinctive value was that it gave equal importance to the perspectives of internal actors whose voices often go unheard in international circles.

8. Internal actors are considered to include governments, political parties, NGOs and other civil society organizations, internally displaced people and the diaspora, including refugees. External actors include donors, multilateral bodies, such as the UN, and international non-governmental organizations.

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9. Each post-conflict situation is unique. However, the Forum process has shown that there are recurrent generic issues that can be identified and addressed. This document cannot do justice to the Forum's rich and nuanced discussions and reports, but it summarizes the key issues, captures the main concerns of internal and external actors and presents a limited number of practical recommendations that would help to improve the relationship between them and thereby contribute to more effective peacebuilding.

## **B) Striking the balance between ownership and partnership**

10. Post-conflict peacebuilding encompasses the daunting challenges of reconciliation, reconstruction and transformation. The goals are to rebuild society, the state and its institutions, to establish effective and democratic governance, to ensure an environment of security and to prevent a relapse into violence. To the greatest extent possible, all of these endeavours require a restoration of confidence and empowerment so that nationals take responsibility for building the kind of society they want to live in. For this to succeed, it is of paramount importance that the process be shaped, driven and owned by internal actors.

*...internal actors are too often treated as passive victims or as "the problem" rather than as active agents of recovery and rebuilding of their own societies.*

11. The emphasis on national ownership does not assume that internal actors will necessarily develop better policies than external actors. Experience shows however that external domination generates local resentment, inertia and resistance, and that externally driven development is often unsustainable. Internal actors grasp the

complexities and needs of their society better than outsiders, a fact that makes national ownership of peacebuilding processes an imperative.

12. In trying to achieve true national ownership, external actors may naively idealize internal actors. It is crucially important to recognize and understand the diversity of interests, perspectives and agendas that internal actors bring to the table.

13. Most of the external actors engaged in peacebuilding have endorsed the principle of national ownership. This is evident in the OECD/DAC Guidelines on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict and other important reference documents. In practice, however, the principle is weakly applied. The country surveys conducted for the Peacebuilding Forum vividly highlight that internal actors are too often treated as passive victims or as “the problem” rather than as active agents of the recovery and rebuilding of their own societies. As Sir Kieran Prendergast, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, stated at the Peacebuilding Forum conference: “We like to say that internal actors are in the driver’s seat, but in reality they are often no more than the chauffeur to the international client in the back seat.”

14. According to a local respondent interviewed in the Sierra Leone study, “*joint proposals were entirely written by the external partner with little or no input from the internal partner*”. In Kosovo, an ethnic Serb respondent complained that “*external actors are creating priorities and final decision-making is exclusively in their hands*”. The relief coordinator of an international non-governmental organization in Afghanistan explained that “*in our programme for vulnerable groups, we came with a proposal and the government was asked to accept it or reject it. Once they approved it, then we approached the wakil (clan leader) for his blessing.*”

#### ***The challenges***

15. Perhaps no amount of policy exhortation can translate into useful peacebuilding practice unless certain organizational practices and incentives of external actors are fundamentally reviewed. In particular, local representatives of international partners must seek, whenever possible, to enable and support rather than to “act” themselves. Doing so often requires protecting crucial (but seemingly ambiguous) in-country processes from the bureaucratic demands for measurable outcomes, and progress against plans and logical frameworks. In short, external actors need become more comfortable with the notion of providing resources the use of which will be determined by internal actors and at a pace dictated by national timetables.

16. As confirmed by the Forum’s country surveys, typically there is a lack of adequate local ownership of peacebuilding processes. The reasons for this are manifold.

17. First, external actors have vastly greater political and economic power, and are much better organized and resourced than internal actors. And there is an evident asymmetry in capacities for knowledge creation and in technical and methodological expertise. This structural inequality is reinforced by local dependence on external funding, and leads to an unbalanced relationship and different levels of confidence and assertiveness. External actors, by design or default, tend to impose their values, policies and models on internal actors. A local respondent in the Sierra Leone study put it this way: “*We are in the driving seat and have our hands firmly on the wheel, but because [donors] control the greater part of it, if I agree I survive and if I disagree I die.*” Not biting the hand that feeds you becomes more important than frankness and initiative. To survive local NGOs may be transformed, willingly or not, in ways inconsistent with their original *raison d’être*.

18. Second, in the immediate aftermath of conflict, external actors typically seek to develop a comprehensive recovery strategy bringing together a series of interdependent and partially overlapping

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humanitarian, peacebuilding, justice and development initiatives. This leads them to press for rapid but comprehensive needs assessment processes to provide an overall framework within which their activities and financing can find their logical place. Such needs assessments *de facto* shape the country’s medium-term development agenda, and to some extent its political agenda. In conditions characterized by acute uncertainty,

insecurity and a lack of social and political cohesion, internal actors are ill-equipped to fully participate and own such processes. They struggle to undertake efficient consultations and decision-making, and they are vulnerable to being overwhelmed by external actors and their time constraints, even when the latter attempt in good faith to involve them. In effect, hasty needs assessments, while technically well designed and executed, may lack that crucial ownership and buy-in which confer legitimacy and give sustainability to the subsequent activities.

19. For their part, national dialogue processes after war are often undertaken only at a late stage, in effect serving to legitimize priorities and strategies already identified. Such occurrences inevitably reinforce the perception that solutions are simply imported from the outside. The pressures felt by donors to respond, and disburse, quickly in the face of need pushes them towards such scenarios.

20. As illustrated throughout the country surveys, internal actors continue to make a strong call for greater accountability of external actors to the societies they seek to assist. The leader of a civil society organization in Kosovo expressed the concern that: *"Until now the internationals have acted without any accountability to the people of Kosova. Decisions have been taken by internationals that will have a profound effect on our lives. I know that they are not elected by the people and that they report to the UN. However, they are running our lives and this is where the argument about accountability to the people comes in."*

21. Third, in the aftermath of violent conflict, external actors may experience great difficulty in identifying credible internal actors to consult and support. Prior to democratic elections, competing claims to representation and legitimacy are not easily resolved. Public authorities may be non-existent, weak or lack legitimacy: corruption and crime may be rampant, and prominent internal actors may be "spoilers", warlords, or people responsible for atrocities.

22. Fourth, the structures, procedures, financing and evaluation criteria of donor organizations are not well adapted to peacebuilding. Indeed, while peacebuilding is inherently integrated, the tools and structures of assistance are not. These problems are frequently exacerbated by turf battles among external actors. The criticisms are that these organizations are insufficiently programmatic and that their focus is too short-term, bureaucratic, hierarchical and averse to risk. Furthermore, they are criticized for prizing rapid project delivery and measurable results above actual impact on the ground.

23. A Serb respondent in Kosovo expressed a widely heard concern as follows: *"There are a lot of factions among external actors. Altogether it seems quite chaotic and diffuse, based on the interests of each external actor. When it comes to frameworks and guidelines by the external actors, it seems that more attention is given to spending money in given timetables than to thinking about the effects and consequences of support."*

24. While external actors often lack the flexibility, patience, creativity and responsiveness required to work in post-war societies, many have made a determined effort to address these shortcomings. Such reassessments have included questioning the relative benefits of the project vs. programme approach, a subject that has been under the development aid microscope for nearly two decades. It is indeed time to situate that debate in relation to peacebuilding so as to move towards more flexible and coherent activities on the ground.

***...peacebuilding has not yet developed the depth of experience, specialization and mission clarity that exists in the areas of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.***

25. Fifth, peacebuilding has not yet developed the depth of experience, specialization and mission clarity that exists in the areas of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. In addition, internal actors may be unfamiliar with the mandates and procedures of external actors, a fact that improperly favours the few who are adept at these. For their part, international personnel often have inadequate understanding of local conditions and cultures. An official of a donor agency working in Guatemala observed that *"attempts have been made to advocate and make changes in a reality that is not well known. Much of what happens is due to a very simplistic interpretation of the different political and social actors in the country."*

#### ***The ways forward***

26. If external actors are committed to local ownership and empowering partnerships, then at the country level they have to integrate these commitments into their goals, priorities,

***If external actors are committed to local ownership and empowering partnerships, then at the country level they have to integrate these commitments into their goals, priorities, plans, modus operandi and attitudes.***

plans, *modus operandi* and attitudes. They should establish and assess all their programmes according to the following criteria: Has this programme been requested by internal actors following legitimate dialogue and consultation? Is this programme driven by internal actors? Does this programme strengthen local capacities? The general presumption should be answers in the affirmative, and any negative answer should require a convincing justification.

27. A broadly accepted set of principles is needed in order to provide a normative framework of reference for "quality partnerships between internal and external actors" and for the definition of "national ownership". At their very core, these principles should describe national ownership as a transformational process that ensures full respect for fundamental human rights. But they must also be practical. As the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast, noted in his opening remarks to the Peacebuilding Forum conference: "There is a need to transform terms like partnership, ownership, participation and stakeholder into specific steps, which can actually help us understand how to achieve this goal in meaningful, and not just token, ways."

28. It is likely that none of the challenges outlined in the previous section can be easily resolved to the satisfaction of all. They certainly cannot be addressed properly by internal or external actors on their own. They have to be tackled instead through partnerships between these parties. The challenge is to ensure that the partnerships entail mutual learning, empower rather than undermine internal actors, and capitalize on local knowledge and skills. Maximum effort must be devoted to strengthening the capacity of institutions of governance and civil society. If that does not happen, the pattern of domination and dependency will not be broken, institutional weaknesses will not be addressed, lasting peace will not be secured, and external actors will not find exit strategies.

29. Implicit in this approach is the need for external actors to be less assertive, more receptive to local ideas and initiatives, and more flexible, adaptable, responsive and patient. According to a regional leader interviewed in Guatemala, "*there is a lot of international co-operation but it moves at a faster pace than [life in] in Huehuetenango. [External actors] want results right away when the [local] dynamics are different*".

30. External actors may argue that needs are so pressing that there is no time to consult internal actors. This fails to appreciate that dialogue which involves internal actors is the only route to accurate identification of needs and to effective responses, and thus sustainability. Participation is not a luxury, it is a necessity, and it sets its own rhythm and timetable. Internal actors will live with the consequences of whatever route is chosen, for better or worse, but they can only take responsibility for it through participatory processes. If external actors justify their controlling positions saying that there are no competent local agents, they may mistakenly confuse a failed state with a failed society. Societies and communities have tremendous resilience, coping mechanisms, and resources even in the most adverse circumstances and some of these may cut across the conflict divide.

#### ***The importance of "quality" dialogue***

31. Quality dialogue processes after conflict often substitute for mechanisms that, under "normal" polities, maintain consensus and stability by mediating the different perceptions and interests – including selfishness and hunger for power – inherent in human society. In societies experiencing overt conflict such mechanisms are most often shattered. As they are restored, *ad hoc* dialogue and consultations need to gradually metamorphose into legitimate institutions and political processes.

32. There are different phases and aims of dialogue among internal actors in the transition from overt conflict to peace, ranging from efforts to facilitate a ceasefire through to constitutional

***The challenge is to ensure that the partnerships entail mutual learning, empower rather than undermine internal actors, and capitalize on local knowledge and skills.***

negotiations. There are ongoing debates on reconciliation, reconstruction and policy transformation. Democracy and development require continuous interaction between the executive, the legislature, political parties and civil society at national and local levels. The greater the quality and inclusiveness of the dialogue, the more likely it is that the outcomes will reflect the necessary compromises, address the needs and interests of different

constituencies, enjoy popular support and serve the national interest. It should be emphasized that extensive dialogue is not separate from or a substitute for normal political and governance processes. It is an intrinsic part of these processes – often a building-block towards them – and must be designed to strengthen them.

33. In this context, *quality dialogue* is understood to be a sustained process of communication in which: a) the participants listen to each other and respect each other's views; b) they are willing to adapt their positions in order to solve identified problems; and c) they regard dialogue as an effective tool for deepening understanding, building consensus and promoting healing. Such processes are very different from adversarial arguments, "dialogues of the deaf" and pro forma consultations.

***Participation is not a luxury, it is a necessity, and it sets its own rhythm and timetable.***

34. Dialogues are not a panacea and may turn out to be conflictual, lengthy, or inconclusive. They may be rendered dysfunctional by powerful interest groups. But they remain essential, and it is important to understand how they can be designed for success. It is equally important to note that a series of smaller, more focused dialogues can have as much, if not more, impact as large national dialogue processes.

35. Since appropriate dialogue techniques differ from one country and culture to another, external actors should utilize local facilitators when supporting dialogue exercises. Regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Organization of American States (OAS), which by their very nature bridge the internal-external divide, can also be usefully engaged in promoting and facilitating dialogue within countries and between internal and external actors.

36. External actors should contribute to national dialogue in ways that are empowering and not domineering. At the request of internal actors, they can fund dialogue initiatives, provide non-partisan facilitation and expert knowledge, and support local efforts to acquire policy expertise and functional skills. Such support will also equip local actors to better participate in dialogue with external actors. Building the competence and confidence of parliamentarians and other elected representatives is especially important in this regard.

### **C) Practical steps**

37. The recommendations in the following section address some of the problems outlined above. Recommendations 1 and 2 address broad structural and policy issues that deal with identified weaknesses in the international peacebuilding architecture. Implementing them will also address the constraints of peacebuilding identified by the Forum process. However, action on these recommendations lies beyond the purview of discussion at the Peacebuilding Forum Conference. Recommendations 3 through 10 have been selected on the basis of several criteria. Firstly, they focus on improvements that are "do-able" in the short to medium term. Secondly, they hold the potential for significant added value with relatively low-cost effort. Thirdly, they represent creative approaches to well-trodden but intractable problems. Fourthly, they demand a response from both internal and external actors. All 10 recommendations were endorsed by the Peacebuilding Forum Conference participants.

38. It is clearly inappropriate for external actors to endorse sound policies and then fail to implement them, particularly when the intended beneficiaries are vulnerable and might suffer great harm from inappropriate approaches. Indeed, too many societies have sought peace and yet succumbed to renewed violence for the imperatives of sustainable local ownership and empowering partnerships to be ignored. The overarching challenge is to better understand realities as they manifest themselves on the ground in order to reduce the gap between peacebuilding policies and practices.

## Part II. Recommendations to help improve the relationship between external and internal actors in post-conflict countries

### Introduction

39. Recommendations 1 and 2 reflect current policy preoccupations within the UN and need to be addressed in the appropriate UN policy fora. Recommendations 3 through 10 below are relatively modest in cost and scope but could have a significant impact by making the relationship between internal and external actors more effective. They can also help to address the disparity between the policy and the practice of peacebuilding. These recommendations are practical and can be implemented by the suggested lead bodies; officials in these bodies have been sounded out by the host organizations and have indicated their interest to taking them forward.

40. Recommendations 3 through 10 are a small contribution to a larger mobilization in favour of conflict management through peacebuilding by the international community, most notably reflected in the attention given to this by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Forum process raised many other timely and valuable ideas which could not be included here, bearing in mind the selection criteria in paragraph 37. Of particular interest is the suggestion to revive and strengthen the consultation process between the UN and regional organizations in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, already formalized in a framework agreement in 2001.

### 1) Introduce assessed budgets for peacebuilding

41. The United Nations system has struggled to respond to the need for more integrated and holistic peacebuilding policies and operational activities in fragile and post-conflict countries. While the importance of peacebuilding is widely accepted by UN departments and member states, institutional capacities, and in particular human resources and training programmes, have been inadequate. Furthermore, in the absence of dedicated financial support for civilian peacebuilding activities, resources must be drawn from other budget lines which creates an unnecessary and unhealthy internal competition for funds.

42. At the level of the United Nations, and in the context of the work of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, it is suggested

that projected peacebuilding activities be formally included in the assessed budgets of UN Peace Operations. This would ensure rapid and predictable funding after the cessation of hostilities – a particularly sensitive moment in peace processes, when peace dividends need to be quickly visible and budgetary provision for minimal recurrent costs and security sector reform are imperative. Policy makers must realize that it is about providing the right kind of funding at the right time. There must also be a more equitable distribution of peacebuilding funding among different post-conflict situations.

43. Such assessed funds should also be available for local peacebuilding-related processes, since voluntary – and therefore uncertain – funding of peacebuilding in the early post-conflict period entails serious inherent risks both of unacceptable delays and of non-delivery of pledges.

44. In parallel, progress is needed on setting up a global Voluntary Peacebuilding Funding Facility in order to limit the scale of assessed peacebuilding budgets. This could be modelled on the existing Voluntary Peacekeeping Account administered by the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Such a facility could be under the authority of a principal UN organ.

**Recommendation 1:** *This recommendation supports existing calls for the United Nations to consider introducing an assessed budget for peacebuilding activities in the context of UN Peace Operations. This would also strengthen local peacebuilding processes and activities that help to prepare the ground for UN action and to render such action more sustainable. It is furthermore suggested to create a Voluntary Peacebuilding Funding Facility to allow for more flexible use of funds to support partner organizations and agencies.*

### 2) Political oversight of peacebuilding

45. The coherence of peacebuilding activities in the United Nations system suffers from an imprecise use of terminology, an uneven understanding of peacebuilding concepts and tools and, most of all, from the distraction of competition for mandates and the resources that come with them. Important efforts are being made by the Department for Political Affairs (DPA), in its role as Focal Point for Peacebuilding in the UN system, to strengthen policy coherence on peacebuilding and to propose ways and means to address inefficiencies.



46. For peacebuilding to be effective, it requires a firm anchor in the multilateral system. This could take the form of a political oversight body that defines peacebuilding policies. It could also advise, monitor progress on, and make adjustments to, peacebuilding strategies and activities when necessary.

**Recommendation 2:** *It is suggested that oversight responsibility for peacebuilding should be assigned to a political subsidiary organ of the UN, perhaps a body reporting to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or the Security Council. Such an organ would have the responsibility to provide advice on peacebuilding mandates, to monitor over time the implementation of peacebuilding strategies and to suggest adjustments when necessary.*

### **3) Strengthen the UN capacity to promote national dialogue and consultation processes in post-conflict countries**

47. Post-conflict societies need to undertake various forms of internal dialogue and consultation as the basis for building national consensus on priorities and for the development of appropriate reconstruction and recovery plans. Structured national dialogue processes often prove to be powerful vectors of reconciliation and trust-building, making vital contributions to achieving stability, building political and social cohesion and forging a national vision for the future. This in turn strengthens democratic culture and contributes to good governance.

48. Important efforts have been made to foster greater conceptual clarity on the importance of dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding and to strengthen democratic processes in fragile states. An important programme is currently underway co-sponsored by International IDEA, UNDP and the Organization of American States, with participation from WSP International, to draw up a handbook for policy-makers and practitioners on dialogue processes and their many uses. The UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) has also been promoting a pioneering project on Democratic Dialogue in the region, creating and managing knowledge on dialogue processes from case studies and key resource people. The introduction by the Security Council of a strong national dialogue component into the terms of reference of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is another very encouraging development.

49. In some cases, however, national dialogue processes may take place only at a late stage and thus *de facto* serve to confer legitimacy on already-determined priorities and strategies largely formulated by external actors, e.g. through needs assessments or other processes. While the importance of national dialogue processes is gradually gaining acceptance as a means to ensure sustainable

solutions after war, the fact is that the international community's ability to promote and support such processes at the field level remains relatively limited. In cases where no legitimate impartial body exists, or can realistically be created, to facilitate a national dialogue, outside actors such as the UN or appropriate non-governmental organizations must be able to play this important role.

50. One example where improved dialogue processes can have an important impact on the relationship between internal and external actors is in the context of post-conflict needs assessments. The United Nations Development Group, UNDP and the World Bank have made important progress in refining approaches to multilateral needs assessments in post-conflict situations, most importantly by seeking not only to involve, but to ensure leadership by national authorities. This approach has been tested in Liberia, Haiti, Iraq and Sudan and leads, in most cases, to comprehensive national recovery strategies. While an improvement on past practice, the tendency is still for them to be driven by donor conference timetables (six weeks in the case of Haiti) and thus to rush unnecessarily what should be national processes of consensus-building and prioritization.

51. Rapid needs assessment processes can and should continue to be used but primarily for the determination of short-term humanitarian and immediate recovery needs. However, mid- to long-term rebuilding and development strategies are better defined through consultative dialogue processes with the broad participation of all significant stakeholders in the country.

**Recommendation 3:** *The United Nations and its key partners should seek to create an institutional capacity to promote, underpin and where appropriate facilitate broadly participatory national dialogue and consensus-building processes in fragile and post-conflict countries with a view to formulating a common vision for the future, to agree on key priorities and to develop appropriate long-term strategies. If undertaken at an early stage, such dialogue processes can inform and thus give legitimacy to needs assessments as well as initiatives for reconciliation. Such a UN capacity could provide services to existing and future UN Peace Operations, Peacebuilding Support Offices and to UN Resident Coordinators in fragile countries. It is recommended that this capacity begin as an extra-budgetary and inter-departmental pilot project, and that its contribution and impact be assessed after three years.*

### **4) Promote exchanges between post-conflict countries**

52. Capacity-building in the context of peacebuilding should not be viewed exclusively as a matter of external actors from stable and developed societies teaching and training internal actors. Much benefit can be derived from

exchanges among peacebuilding practitioners and decision-makers from fragile and post-conflict countries themselves. In the experience of WSP International over many years, these exchanges are a very productive means of learning because of the similar structural conditions and constraints in the countries concerned. They inspire ideas and hope when success stories are shared, and offer encouragement when common difficulties are explored.

53. A programme should be created to provide an opportunity for members of government and civil society across conflict-affected countries to informally share their experiences and insights on topics such as national and local dialogue processes, reconciliation, truth commissions, security sector reform, political reform and constitutional negotiations. They should also address issues related to the role and support of external actors, and provide feedback to these actors.

54. This targeted framework should build on recent experiences of South-South cooperation on other issues and begin as a pilot programme of exchanges and workshops on peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Such a pilot project should begin in Africa, where the needs are greatest. The programme could thereafter be extended to other regions and to inter-regional dialogue.

**Recommendation 4:** *It is suggested that the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in close consultation with, and with the support of, the UN's Office of the Special Advisor on Africa and the African Union's Peace and Security Council and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), should consider initiating a programme of cross-country exchanges and workshops for governmental and civil society actors engaged in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Africa. They should invite peacebuilding practitioners to design and facilitate productive discussions, and document and disseminate the results. The ECA could liaise with the other UN regional economic commissions, as well as with UNDP's Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, in order to broaden the programme over time. Other regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), are also encouraged to promote horizontal exchanges as described above.*

### **5) Foster closer links between the OECD/DAC's Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation and representatives of post-conflict countries**

55. The OECD/DAC and its Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation (CPDC) review

experience and formulate good practice guidelines on peacebuilding and conflict prevention for DAC member states. There is no equivalent group of actors or practitioners from fragile and post-conflict countries with whom they can interact at the practical level. DAC does not engage in systematic consultations with such actors, although DAC's one-off events with representatives of developing countries have been useful and stimulating to its members. Closer links to internal actors in fragile and post-conflict countries would help the CPDC to promote local participation, ownership and productive partnerships in their assistance programmes.

56. The CPDC could more systematically interact with peacebuilding practitioners and decision-makers from fragile and post-conflict countries. A productive relationship between such a group and CPDC members can contribute not only to policy but, most importantly, to the field operations of major external actors. It would also set an excellent example for consultative mechanisms between internal and external actors at the national level. This could indeed be an explicit goal of such an initiative. The consultative body could use the results of the exchange/workshop programme proposed in 4) above, thus drawing additional credibility from a wider group of internal actors.

**Recommendation 5:** *DAC/CPDC should aim to foster closer and more regular links with state and civil society actors in fragile and post-conflict countries and with relevant governmental and non-governmental regional organizations. The objective should be to improve dialogue with these actors in respect of the peacebuilding and conflict prevention policies and practices of CPDC members and benefit from their feedback. Informal consultations could also be undertaken on relevant CPDC outputs. Once recommendation 4 becomes inter-regional, more formal consultation mechanisms should be considered.*

### **6) Encourage external accountability to internal officials and representatives**

57. In their policy documents, external actors emphasize the principles of accountability and transparency in good governance. Existing mechanisms ensure that internal actors receiving external support are accountable to external donors and that donors are accountable to their home parliaments or other elected bodies. The work of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) illustrates the efforts external actors are making to improve the quality and accountability of the humanitarian sector.