



# General Assembly Security Council

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## Peacebuilding Commission

Eighth session

2014 annual session

### Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 June 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Patriota. . . . . (Brazil)

## Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Opening of the session

*Opening remarks by the Chair*

*Opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General*

*Keynote address by Mr. José Ramos-Horta, former President of Timor-Leste*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda (PBC/8/AS/1)**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Opening of the session**

*Opening remarks by the Chair*

2. **The Chair** declared open the 2014 annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission. He said that progress had undoubtedly been made in addressing the weaknesses of international responses to post-conflict situations, including gaps in critical funding, a lack of coordination and the short attention span of many international actors, to which former Secretary-General Kofi Annan had referred at the first ever meeting of the Commission in 2006. The achievements of Timor-Leste in moving towards sustainable peace and development were particularly encouraging; similar progress was also evident in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, there were still gaps in the support provided by the international community in post-conflict situations, and recent events in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Iraq were painful reminders that building and sustaining peace was an arduous, continuous and complex process. In order to ensure timely, effective and sustained support for peacebuilding, it was important to explore where intergovernmental policy and commitment could be further strengthened, and also to learn from mistaken strategies and policies that had exacerbated, rather than reduced, tensions and hostility.

3. The first annual session of the Commission, convened as a result of discussions held by the Organizational Committee in 2013, marked an important step forward and should contribute to the development of policy directions relevant to countries emerging from conflict. The annual sessions would provide a regular opportunity for reflection on the role of international frameworks, policies and Member States' commitments in helping countries to avoid a relapse into conflict. The main theme selected for the first annual session was "Sustainable support for peacebuilding: the domestic and international aspects", with two sub-themes: "Mobilization of international and domestic resources and revenue generation" and "Lessons learned on the development of national capacities and sustainability of resources in the context of United Nations mission transitions", which would be

addressed at separate working sessions. It was to be hoped that discussions on the first sub-theme would shed light on the policy gaps in and opportunities for intergovernmental action to ensure appropriate support for domestic resource mobilization in countries emerging from conflict, and also focus on the urgent need for an effective global policy framework and action to help curb and mitigate the impact of illicit financial flows out of those countries. It would be important to explore effective international cooperation, coordination and information-sharing mechanisms to ensure that national revenues were used to promote inclusive socioeconomic development and strengthen domestic institutions, in accordance with the principle of national ownership. It was hoped that discussions on the second sub-theme would highlight the importance of continued international commitment to countries undergoing post-conflict transitions beyond the drawdown and exit of Security Council-mandated missions, bearing in mind that the sustainable generation of domestic resources and capacities was crucial to ensure the sustainability of the progress made in security and political dimensions, as well as to deepen national ownership of peacebuilding strategies.

4. The theme of the annual session highlighted the centrality for peacebuilding of integrating peace and development in a mutually-reinforcing relationship. While specific domestic resource mobilization strategies were needed to ensure that countries emerging from conflict could increasingly take control of their own policies, such policies could not be viewed solely from a development point of view. It was vital also to consider what specific political challenges needed to be overcome in order for increased revenue generation to yield inclusive peace dividends and to reflect on what tasks and responsibilities fell, respectively, to national Governments and the international community in that regard. At the same time, the absence of strong development support, especially in such areas as job creation and the provision of public services, was likely to increase the political tensions around post-conflict governance structures and political agreements. For that reason, sound post-conflict development strategies were a crucial part of a successful political strategy for ensuring lasting peace. A people-centred approach, focused on both inclusiveness and national ownership, was essential.

*Opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General*

5. The Deputy Secretary-General said that the negotiations leading to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, in which he had played a part as President of the General Assembly, had not been easy. He was therefore particularly gratified to see the steady progress being made by the Commission, and he urged Member States and the Secretariat to do their utmost to bring out its full potential. In 2005, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan had said that the Commission was needed to fill a “gaping hole”, namely the lack of an institutional mechanism in the United Nations to help countries with the transition from war to peace. The Commission had been, and still was, needed to sustain international attention beyond the immediate moment of acute crisis in conflict-affected countries, and had been envisaged as a way to enhance the coherence of the international community’s response, as well as to marshal resources to assist countries in need; the Peacebuilding Fund still played an important role in that regard. Recalling that, as President of the General Assembly, he had said that the Commission would offer a real chance to make a difference for the better in years to come for a great number of men, women and children in conflict-stricken countries, he recognized the positive results already achieved thanks to both the commitment and generosity of Member States and the professionalism of United Nations staff members at Headquarters and on the ground.

6. The current annual session of the Commission provided the first ever opportunity to build on the valuable country-specific approach taken to date by engaging in broader thematic discussions that could help galvanize international support and refine policy frameworks so that they were more directly supportive of countries emerging from conflict. The Commission was well placed to identify gaps, in view of its advisory role as a subsidiary organ of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, and he urged Member States to carry the results of the current discussions to those and other relevant intergovernmental bodies. The Commission’s performance would be measured in part by its ability to launch and influence global policymaking processes. It was therefore timely that the first annual session of the Commission was taking place just ahead of the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which

represented an important opportunity to develop and refine its work.

7. Countries emerging from conflict desperately needed financial resources and political support. Public mistrust often continued to be felt, and it was important for countries to maintain or restore people’s faith in the legitimacy of the State and a peaceful road ahead. That required Governments to work to ensure that public services were delivered equitably and that safe water, proper sanitation, health care, justice, education and other services became realities or, at least, achievable goals. While international aid was necessary in many situations, it rarely helped to build a new social contract and could also weaken national ownership. The best way to assist countries in post-conflict transition was to help them to generate their own resources and capacities. That was no easy task given that, in countries recovering from conflict, infrastructure had often been destroyed, many professionals had left the country, former fighters lacked employment and economic activity was not functioning normally. For instance, war-ravaged societies often lacked the capacity to generate domestic revenue through taxation. Rwanda and Burundi, which had both emerged from severe conflicts and had managed to develop their tax administrations, devise effective tax policies, and enhance the integrity and credibility of those institutions, were encouraging examples of success. In those countries, tax evasion and corruption had declined and there had been a significant increase in tax revenues, which, together with the resulting stronger institutions, had further reinforced the State-building process. The interrelationship between those various factors merited further analysis.

8. The mobilization of domestic resources was hampered by illicit financial flows which, in recent years, had cost developing countries almost a trillion dollars, representing double the amount of foreign direct investment and more than six times the official development assistance they received. Africa was particularly affected, with illicit outflows amounting to 6 per cent of gross domestic product, or US\$ 50 billion per year. The effects were hugely damaging, as countries emerging from conflict were deprived of significant resources that could otherwise be invested in improving the life of their citizens. The process could lead to a situation where weak institutions made possible large-scale illicit transfers of money, which in turn destabilized and undermined institutional structures.

International cooperation and new frameworks on financial transparency were certainly needed to confront the problem. However, strong leadership and well-functioning national governance was, above all, required to break the vicious cycle.

9. The members of the Peacebuilding Commission should consider their role and contribution throughout the process of post-conflict transition. In particular, Member States should support the development of capacities and institutions that enabled post-conflict countries to raise their own revenues; they should combat illicit flows by supporting action on the basis of existing agreements or through regulations on corruption, bribery and sharing of tax information, and consider developing additional policies to eliminate illicit financial flows, including in relation to organized crime and transnational organized crime; and they should ensure predictable and more stable support for post-conflict countries to facilitate ongoing transitions. When United Nations missions closed, the Peacebuilding Fund could help offset the associated reduction in financing, as it had done successfully in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. He therefore urged Member States to support the Fund generously.

10. At a recent Security Council briefing on post-conflict peacebuilding, the Chair of the Commission had emphasized the importance of inclusivity and participation, pointing out that while women and youth endured the tragic consequences of violent conflicts, they were also strategic agents for societal transformation and emancipation in post-conflict societies. In its deliberations, the Commission should remember that its peacebuilding efforts must be centred on people, who had both the aspirations and the power to bring lasting recovery and stability to their countries.

*Keynote address by Mr. José Ramos-Horta,  
former President of Timor-Leste*

11. **Mr. Ramos-Horta** (former President of Timor-Leste, and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau) said that the decision to hold annual substantive sessions of the Peacebuilding Commission was a positive step forward that would strengthen the Commission's role of advocacy, resource mobilization and promotion of partnerships to build and sustain peace. The current annual session should provide a valuable forum for stocktaking and exchanges aimed at enhancing the Commission's

contribution to the United Nations peace and security agenda. His recent experience in Guinea-Bissau had reinforced his conviction that the Commission should be called upon to strengthen its role in ensuring timely and sustainable support for peacebuilding, particular where there were challenges of instability and State institutions with weak delivery capacity. The legitimate expectations of those impacted by conflicts, especially vulnerable groups including women, young people and children, must be satisfied.

12. Since its establishment, the Commission, also operating through the Peacebuilding Fund and supported by the Peacebuilding Support Office, had worked assiduously to perform its mandated role, and had brought together the broad capacities and experience of the United Nations in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, respect for human rights, the rule of law, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and long-term development. Through its multidimensional engagement, it had been actively involved in addressing peacebuilding challenges in many countries around the world.

13. The challenges to sustainable peacebuilding were both domestic and international in nature. Because the Commission, as an international partner, played only an advisory role in the countries on its agenda, adequate national political authority and ownership was required to ensure that its support was applied efficiently, effectively and with accountability at the domestic level. In most countries on the Commission's agenda, there was a need for coordination between a multiplicity of international partners, with diverse implementation modalities and timeframes, while proper assessment of the capacities of beneficiary State institutions to absorb funding allocations was also required, together with capacity-building. While the national steering committee in any given country was a key mechanism for facilitating the conduct of regular consultative processes and liaison between domestic and international aspects of the Commission's engagement, it was to be hoped that the Commission would also work to enhance overall coordination at the level of international partners, in accordance with its mandate. A good combination of national and international coordination would significantly improve the international community's capacity to stay the course in a post-conflict country until the work of sustainable peacebuilding was completed.

14. The Commission's sustained and visible engagement was particularly important in the event of abrupt national challenges, such as unconstitutional changes of power, which were actually the context that most urgently required peacebuilding efforts, rather than the application of sanctions. Countries on the Commission's agenda required the same level of attention for as long as their populations were vulnerable, regardless of circumstance or the Government in place. When a country was on the Commission's agenda, its authorities were required, at the very least, to show a commitment to political stability and peacebuilding in order to make progress with socioeconomic development; at the same time, it was implicit that the Commission's involvement would focus additional international attention and galvanize support for the country. In short, it was vital to ensure national ownership of and commitment to the peacebuilding process; ongoing close consultation and cooperation between international partners and national Governments; and smooth coordination of international partners' efforts. The Commission was central to those efforts, and it was to be hoped that the current annual session would result in an even greater determination to assist countries in achieving sustainable peacebuilding through an effective blend of domestic national commitment and international engagement.

15. With regard to Guinea-Bissau specifically, his recent meetings with the newly elected President and Prime Minister, and with the leaders of the defence forces, had reassured him that the country had reached a turning point. Much remained to be done, however, including the back payment of salaries to the civil service. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) had drafted a strategic document on rebuilding State institutions, which had been fully endorsed by the new Prime Minister, and a strategic planning commission proposed by UNIOGBIS had been launched in September 2013 with support from the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. The United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank, working with national counterparts and the Economic Community of West African States, had been active in preparing a pledging conference. In that regard, it was to be hoped that the international community would respond to the needs and expectations of the people of Guinea-Bissau, since although the country could be seen as a success story, having been steered back to

constitutional democratic order at little cost to the international community, it still needed international support if its success was not to prove short-lived.

16. There were no shortcuts to peace and State-building, the first requirement for which was national ownership and strong, credible national leadership. When Timor-Leste — a better known success story, although still a fragile State — had experienced severe setbacks in 2006, credible national actors and a democratically elected leader had been able to work together to bring the country back from the brink of failure. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, after decades of failed experiments and failed leadership, the election of a new generation of leaders had brought renewed optimism. In both cases, the international community had played a critical supporting role, enabling civilian and military leaders to reengage with each other and bridge past divides. Both countries were relatively rich in strategic resources. While Timor-Leste was already benefiting from sound resource management, having established a successful Petroleum Fund in 2005, Guinea-Bissau was only just beginning to tap into resources such as phosphates, bauxite and heavy sand. He had advised the leaders of Guinea-Bissau to review all the country's resource management agreements, including those relating to forestry and fisheries. The Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund should take the lead in mobilizing resources to provide timely and strategic support for Guinea-Bissau, in the areas of State-building and public administration, justice and security sector reforms, in order to consolidate its success and prevent a relapse into crisis.

*The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.*