

REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY ISMAEL ABRAÃO GASPAR MARTINS, CHAIRMAN OF PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION AT WORKING CONFERENCE ON “GETTING THE PBC OFF THE GROUND” – HOW TO INCLUDE THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Madame Chairperson,

I would like to start by thanking the Friedrich Erbert Foundation and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed conflict for organizing this important meeting whose results will certainly contribute to build up the fundamentals of the work of this important body, the Peacebuilding Commission.

I would also like to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to address this meeting.

The presence, in this room, of distinguished delegates from civil society, the members of the PBC and the UN in general, the International Financial Institutions and other key players demonstrate once more that peacebuilding is indeed an issue of partnership if we have to fulfill the prerequisite designed by the World leaders in September 2005 by stating that the main purpose of the peacebuilding Commission is to bring together all relevant actors and marshal resources, to advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict and peacebuilding recovery.

In your invitation letter, Mr. Director of the New York Office of the Friederich Erbert Foundation, you asked me to fulfill the difficult task of providing an overview of the state of the affairs of the PBC after the first meetings of the Organizational Committee and the Challenges ahead of the first country-specific meetings;

I specially have called it a difficult task bearing in mind the early stage of the work of the PBC after its launching; On the other hand, I had the honour to read carefully the Background Paper prepared for this meeting and realized how the civil society is well informed on the work of the Organizational Committee. The Background Paper also contains important reflections and concrete proposals on the way ahead for the PBC; I particularly fully appreciate this important contribution.

As you can see, Chair, the organizers have somehow made my task difficult by elaborating in advance on aspects of the subject I have been asked to focus on.

It is however an honour for me to seize this opportunity to share a few remarks;

As you all know, after the launching of the Peacebuilding Commission on June 23, 2006, the Organizational committee held its first meeting on July 13 in order, among other issues, to agree on the Process for country specific meetings, dates and upcoming events, as well as to decide formally on the consideration of the cases of Burundi and Serra Leone and to consider the list of participants for country-specific meetings on both cases based on op.7 of resolutions A/60/180 and 1645.

This meeting was also preceded by a number of preliminary consultations held by myself and the Vice-Chairs with the representatives of the countries concerned, the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and representatives of the World Bank and IMF and the Inter-parliamentary Union. I was also pleased to meet Mr. Jurgen Stetten, Director of the Friedrich Erbert Foundation for the New York Office and the Executive Director of the UN Global Compact at the same period.

A substantive briefing for the Organizational Committee took place on July 19, 2006 during which the distinguished representatives of Burundi and Serra Leone shared, with the members of the Organizational Committee, their vision of what they expect from the Peacebuilding Commission. I was particularly satisfied by the prompt response of the two countries to provide their briefings and to demonstrate their readiness to work with the Peacebuilding Commission. The participation of financial institutions was also an important starting point of this partnership we are all building up.

As we all know, the resolutions A/60/180 and 1645 requested the Secretary General to set up a Fund and report to the General Assembly; in this connection, technical working group comprising the Trust Fund experts within the UN system have been busy to produce the Terms of Reference of the Fund while at the same time consultations with member States have been taking place. Ambassador Carolyn McCaskey, Head of the Peacebuilding

Support Office here present is better qualified to speak about this important tool of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Madame Chair,

Due to some extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the country-specific meetings of September 6 and 7 provided for by the Peacebuilding tentative timeline and agreed by the members of the Organizational Committee on July 13 have been postponed and will take place on October 12 for Serra Leone and 13, for Burundi respectively.

As demonstrated by the briefings of the representatives of both Burundi and Serra Leone during the meeting of July, 19, the expectations are high; **the main question remains how the Peacebuilding Commission is going to deliver in order to meet these expectations according to its mandate and the means at its disposal.**

This therefore takes me to the second part of the request made to me by the organizers concerning the challenges ahead. The forthcoming country-specific meetings will be crucial for the following stages; the Organizational Committee will hold consultations well in advance to ensure the success of these meetings; it will also tackle some organizational aspects regarding, albeit, the participants to the meetings.

The Organizational Committee will have the opportunity to discuss in details the next steps of the Peacebuilding Commission work on the ground after the country specific meetings to be held in October this year.

In my point of view, this exercise should benefit from the reflections made on the same subject in different *fora* such as the one taking place today. The same exercise should also build on the experience accumulated by different bodies and institutions in Serra Leone and Burundi, as well as the experience of the civil society, private sector and religious leaders in those countries. The meetings on the regional perspectives of the Peacebuilding Commission organized by the Friedrich Erbert Foundation in Africa, Asia and Latin America constitute a concrete example of the kind of useful brainstorming from which the work of the Peacebuilding Commission may benefit.

The first challenge, as I see it, will be defining the guiding principles of the PBC's work on the ground, and developing the PBC's work plan; this is a complex task.

Let's all agree that peacebuilding is not a new notion, even if we acknowledge that the name of this exercise may differ.

Peacebuilding means different things to different people and countries, based on their personal or national perspectives and experiences. It may not be easy for the PBC to reach agreement on *what does peacebuilding mean for the PBC*, but we should start the process of discussing this – this kind of brain-storming – because through discussion, and hearing of the experiences of other post-conflict countries, we will start to develop guidelines or a strategy of how the PBC should contribute to peace building.

What the PBC does to support each country on its agenda will vary according to the security, political, economic, and social conditions in the country, and its neighbors and supporters (political and financial). And these security, political, economic, and social conditions will change as the country progresses. For this reason, it will be important for the PBC to be flexible in its approach.

In this regard, members of the Peacebuilding Organizational Committee from countries that have experienced conflicts should also take this opportunity to speak out on their own experience.

On the other hand, bringing together the different players will require a sense of permanent dialogue and **a clear definition of the bridge the PBC will have to build taking into account the diversity of the nature and the activities of the institutions involved on the ground.**

We should also be able to listen to the people and authorities of the countries concerned on what they expect from us. They also bear the primary responsibility of creating a suitable environment for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Madame Chairperson,

As I stated on the occasion of the launching of the PBC, we have embarked on an integrated and innovative approach in which we will be judged not by the eloquence of our statements, but by concrete actions and results.

Bright ideas won't consequently be enough if there are not followed by concrete measures, including adequate resources for the Peacebuilding Fund and other activities regarding the recovery of the countries emerging from conflicts.

To fulfill all those tasks, it is also extremely important that the Peacebuilding Support Office be given the necessary means to support the burden of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Chairman, the second challenge we face in the coming weeks will be to coordinate the key players, and ensure they are all moving forward in the same direction, with a common strategy and the shared aim of bringing the best possible outcome for Burundi and Sierra Leone, not only now, but in the distant future. These key players include the national governments, the UN, the International Financial Institutions, regional organizations, international donors, international NGOs, the private sector and *civil society*

Mr. Chairperson,

Op.21 of resolutions A/60/180 and 1645 has provided a framework for the role of the civil society, non governmental organizations and private sector. The same role is reflected in the Rules of Procedure of the Peacebuilding Commission by stating , I quote:< the Chair shall, in consultation with its members, provide on a regular basis for consultation with representatives of civil society, non governmental organizations including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate.>end of quote.

According to the same Rules of Procedure, the Peacebuilding Organizational Committee shall develop further details and modalities. Those details will certainly respond to the question frequently asked on the form of the dialogue between the Civil Society and private sector and the Peacebuilding Commission. I am pleased to note that the Position Paper of this meeting has also elaborated on this issue, as a contribution to the ongoing reflection.

I personally will spare no effort to fulfill this mandate given to me by the Organizational Committee. I am particularly pleased to note the participation in this meeting of local NGO's from the countries concerned, Burundi and Serra Leone. Their daily experience on the ground is indeed an added value for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

As your background paper so rightly points out, a third challenge will be to establish the PBC as a “clearing house” for quality research and analysis on peace building, for gathering lessons that can be learned from other experiences, and for developing methods for monitoring and evaluating progress. And for this we will rely heavily on the specialist expertise of the Support Office.

Madame Chairperson,

Let me conclude by stating that getting the Peacebuilding Commission off the ground is a common challenge; it consequently requires the efforts of all of us. To face this challenge, we should be optimistic and strong-minded. Let’s explore the good side of the PBC, take advantage of what it can offer and provide it with a capacity to deliver in a transparent, flexible and result-oriented approach. Reaching positive and concrete results is the only achievement the people of countries emerging from conflicts can expect from us.

I thank you.