

Chairman,

Let me start by thanking the Inter-parliamentary Union for the invitation extended to me to participate in this important event to discuss issues related to the Peacebuilding Commission. This is a clear demonstration of our common interest in ending the cycle of violence that has affected the lives of millions of people.

Shortly after my appointment as Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission, I had the honour to meet with the Representative of the Inter-parliamentary Union in New York and I was particularly impressed by the assurances I was given on that occasion regarding the role IPU can play in helping the Peacebuilding Commission fulfilling its tasks, including in areas such as transitional justice.

One of the questions in the mind of many participants in this event today is the state of affairs of the Peacebuilding Commission after its launch and the holding of the first two country-specific meetings on Sierra Leone and Burundi.

I will try to fulfill this difficult task - I refer to it as a difficult task bearing in mind the early stage of the work of the Commission and the great expectations placed on what this new body resulting from the UN reform can deliver to address the challenge of post-conflict rehabilitation in several countries in the world particularly in Africa.

The first meeting of note was the launch of the Peacebuilding Commission on 23 June this year, after which the Organizational Committee held its first meetings (in July) in order, among other issues, to agree on the process for country-specific meetings with reference to the countries on the agenda Burundi and Sierra Leone.

The second significant meeting was 19 July when the Organizational Committee received a substantive briefing on Sierra Leone and Burundi. Representatives of Burundi and Sierra Leone shared their vision of their respective countries, and what they expect from the Peacebuilding Commission. And UN, World Bank and IMF representatives gave their assessments of what these two countries need in terms of post-conflict recovery.

The very important first country specific meetings, on Sierra Leone and Burundi, were held here in New York 12-13 October, in this very ECOSOC Chamber. During these meetings, attended by high level delegations from the two countries, members of the Peacebuilding Commission reinforced the Burundi and Sierra Leone government's views of the specific critical challenges that impede the consolidation of peace and need to be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and create a suitable environment for development and reconstruction.

Concrete areas of intervention were therefore selected, and the governments of Sierra Leone and Burundi were invited to further develop strategies and plans for addressing the critical peacebuilding issues identified by the meetings. This task will obviously be carried out by the governments concerned with the assistance of the United Nations System at the country level.

At the end of the deliberations, both Burundi and Sierra Leone were declared eligible for financial assistance from the newly established Peacebuilding Fund.

Following the country-specific meetings, the PBC's next phase will require a new approach: shifting the central work of peace-building to the field.

For this purpose, the government concerned and the UN Country Team assisted by the Peacebuilding Support Office are currently in a close working relationship in order to narrow down the selected areas to enable concrete actions by the Peacebuilding Commission and the international community. Important steps have already been taken in this direction both in Burundi and Sierra Leone. Representatives of the Peacebuilding Support Office are traveling soon to Burundi and Sierra Leone to reinforce the engagement of the Commission with governments concerned.

However, shifting the focus of the work of peace building to the field does not represent a lack of action here in New York thus the Organizational Committee will continue to meet on procedural and thematic issues.

Mr. Chairman,

The Peacebuilding Commission Support Office is a fundamental tool for the work of the PBC. Substantial efforts are underway for the staffing of the Office and the creation of suitable working conditions. It is however essential that these efforts be finalized as soon as possible taking into account the increasing demands for results as the work of the Peacebuilding Commission proceeds.

I am particularly pleased by the role being played by governments of Sierra Leone and Burundi; they have both provided for a legal framework and established national bodies to facilitate the work of the PBC. I also share their claims for more concrete actions on the field and in this regard we are considering kick start specific operations supported by the Peacebuilding Fund before the forthcoming Peacebuilding Country-Specific Meetings. It is however important to agree that the national governments bear the primary responsibility for creating a suitable environment for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

As the Secretary General Kofi Anan rightly indicated in his 2006 Annual Report, I quote: "Where Peacebuilding succeeds, it is always the leadership of domestic actors that is essential ingredient of success. No amount of international engagement can substitute for domestic political leaders shouldering their responsibilities and leading their people towards peace and development, end of quote.

The Peacebuilding Commission Support Office is a fundamental tool for the work of this body. Substantial efforts are underway for the staffing of the Office and the creation of working conditions. It is however essential that these efforts be concretized as soon as

possible taking into account the increasing demands for results as the work of the Peacebuilding Commission proceeds.

As Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission I have benefit from the collaboration of my colleagues, the Vice Chairs, the Ambassadors of Norway and El Salvador, the Peacebuilding Support Office and all the members of the Organizational Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

As you will remember, the World Summit of September last year clearly stated that the main purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission was to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

This commonly agreed purpose of the Commission mobilized many Member States to support the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the adoption of the joint General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions of 20 December last year, resolutions A/60/180 and 1645.

This commitment needs therefore to be strictly observed if we are to keep everybody on board for this important project of peacebuilding.

The challenge *on the ground* will be to manage the high expectations of people in countries emerging from conflicts, therefore, the question is how the governments concerned and the Peacebuilding Commission are going to deliver in order to meet the hope of the populations.

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

Managing this integrated approach is not easy. Bringing together the different players will require continuous dialogue and a clear vision of the precise role the Peacebuilding Commission will have to play in bridging the gap between peacekeeping and development assistance, in general and in the countries on its agenda.

The challenge is therefore to effectively 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. These key players include the national governments, the United Nations, the International Financial Institutions, regional organizations, international donors, and civil society, including NGOs and the private sector.

The flow of information among the different players is also an important tool for this coordination. The Peacebuilding Commission is currently working on the dissemination

of information regarding its activities among the UN agencies, and actors in the peacebuilding community, as well as for the public in general.

Mr. Chairman,

As rightly pointed out by Professor Gilbert Khadiagala regarding the Great Lakes African region and I quote: “Severe conflicts meant that peoples and societies would enter the new century with a precipitous decline in almost all the socio-economic indices of human security and development, raising fundamental questions about the ability of States to meaningfully parade as enhancers of Security. In weakening the internal capability of States, the conflict also postponed the evolution of collective interstate efforts for stability and development”. End of quote.

As both the 2004 UN High-level Panel and the report of the Commission for Africa rightly suggested, effective peacebuilding requires rapid assistance to meet immediate needs and begin the reconstruction process, but there is often a problem in gaining swift access to substantial *development aid* as opposed to *humanitarian assistance*.

The contribution of \$140 million US dollars to the Peacebuilding Fund is commendable. However, the fund still remains at a low level when measured against the urgent needs in post-conflict countries.

Peacebuilding assistance does not mean only dollars. The PBC can also provide support through diplomacy, advocacy, public relations, and by promoting the role of civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

The important contribution of civil society was clearly recognized in the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council which also encouraged the PBC to consult with civil society, nongovernmental organizations, including women’s organizations and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities.

Parliaments are the voice of the people. As said in Latin “Vox Populi, vox Dei”. By stating this, the ancient Romans wanted to express our obligation of taking into account the opinions expressed by the people. This demonstrates consequently the importance of Parliaments in all the fields of life, including in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I am therefore pleased by this dialogue with the Inter-parliamentary Union. I highly value in particular the initiatives concerning close cooperation with other players such as UNDP and national governments concerning the strengthening of the role of parliaments in crisis prevention and recovery.

I am also pleased to notice that, among the 30 cases studies selected in the framework of this initiative, the two countries on the PBC agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone, have been taken into account.

The conclusions of the International Conference on Parliaments, Crisis, Prevention and Recovery jointly hosted in April this year by UNDP, government and the Chamber of Representatives of the Kingdom of Belgium in association with the IPU, constitute also an important tool to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

Peacebuilding is still a long way to go. Let's spare no effort to reach this objective. Let's all agree with what Secretary-General Kofi Anan stated in his 2006 Annual Report, and I quote: "The Peacebuilding Commission has been slow to start and has yet to show its full promise. But good things take time, and we should not be discouraged by the fact that this new body is still trying to find effective ways of working". End of quote.

Before I conclude let me express my sincere wish that this session could represent an important contribution to reinforce the cooperation between the UN and the IPU. This will be a major step in expanding the preventive action of our two organisations. Prevention is by far less costly in both human lives and actual monetary resources. Therefore, better for promoting the noble cause of peace in the world.

I Thank you