

Security Council

21 January 2011

Remarks to the Special Debate of the Security Council on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding - Institution Building

Ban Ki-moon

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

Trying to impose an outside model on a post-conflict country can do more harm than good. Each country's institutions develop on their own trajectory and at their own pace. They should be allowed to develop incrementally and with a certain level of experimentation to learn and change.

Similarly, institutional change should not be approached as a technical exercise. Rather, it should be viewed and pursued within the broader context of a country's political processes, development and social change.

In Guinea-Bissau, we have found that weak institutions at multiple levels remain one of the main causes of political instability and the lack of socio-economic development.

Institutions are not just bricks and mortar. They are also about informal norms and values, trust and social cohesion.

Public confidence in the police, for example, is required for reformed police forces to be effective and regain authority. Shared norms are necessary to enable legal systems to apply the law equally to all, including different ethnic groups, minorities and women. Respect for international standards, including human rights law, will support public trust in institutions.

Building these intangible qualities and capacities and addressing public perceptions are particularly important in post-conflict societies. International assistance can sometimes facilitate such change, but only if it is highly sensitive to the political and social dynamics and how they evolve over time.

Third, institution building should start early and be sustained not only for years, but decades.

In the short-term, early and tangible progress needs to be made in a few priority areas to restore confidence and increase the legitimacy of national institutions. Such gains could include providing security in key areas of the country, increasing access to justice systems, or expanding health and education services.

Quick and focused capacity development can enable key institutions to begin functioning again. Peacekeepers, development and humanitarian actors can play an important role in this regard.

At the same time, premature reform efforts can be risky, particularly if they are taking place under a short-term transitional government and before a first post-conflict 907 eW nB4BTF 26 f 1028 m 2006 only 5 8 26 20

In this regard, the Peacebuilding Commission provides an important political platform for countries on its agenda, which can help focus attention on long-term institution building priorities and mobilize resources for them, share lessons learned and sustain engagement by the international community.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

There is much that we can do to improve our efforts, reduce fragmentation and promote a coherent approach.

We can better reflect institution building in assessments, identify what existing institutions are present and can be developed, and ensure better predictability and accountability for delivery by the United Nations system.

Many of the steps we are taking as part of our peacebuilding and integration agendas are strengthening coherence within the United Nations system, including Integrated Strategic Frameworks that now bring together the missions and UN Country Teams around shared strategic objectives.