Clarity, Coherence and Context

Three Priorities for Sustainable Peacebuilding

Cedric de Coning

Working Paper
The Future of the Peacebuilding Architecture Project

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Preface – From the Project Director

At the 2005 World Summit in New York City, member states of the United Nations agreed to create "a dedicated institutional mechanism to address the special needs of countries emerging from conflict towards recovery, reintegration and reconstruction and to assist them in laying the foundation for sustainable development". That new mechanism was the UN Peacebuilding Commission and two associated bodies: a Peacebuilding Support Office and a Peacebuilding Fund. Together, these new entities have been characterized as the UN's new peacebuilding architecture, or PBA.

This Working Paper is one of nine essays that examine the possible future role of the UN's peacebuilding architecture. They were written as part of a project co-organized by the Centre for International Policy Studies at the University of Ottawa and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. All of the contributors to the project were asked to identify realistic but ambitious "stretch targets" for the Peacebuilding Commission and its associated bodies over the next five to ten years. The resulting Working Papers, including this one, seek to stimulate fresh thinking about the UN's role in peacebuilding.

The moment is ripe for such rethinking: During 2010, the UN will review the performance of the PBA to date, including the question of whether it has achieved its mandated objectives. Most of the contributors to this project believe that the PBA should pursue a more ambitious agenda over the next five years. While the PBC and its associated bodies have succeeded in carving out a niche for themselves, that niche remains a small one. Yet the need for more focused international attention, expertise, and coordinated and sustained assistance towards war-torn countries is undiminished. It remains to be seen whether UN officials and the organization's member states will rise to the challenge of delivering on the PBA's initial promise over the next five years and beyond, but doing so will at least require a vision of what the PBA can potentially accomplish in this period. The Working Papers produced in this project are intended to provide grist for this visioning effort.

Roland Paris
Ottawa, January 2010

Summary

This paper will focus on three challenges that should inform the 2010 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, namely: (1) developing the UN peacebuilding concept and operational model; (2) significantly stepping-up efforts to improve system-wide coherence; and (3) seriously implementing the principle of local ownership.

- There is a need to revisit and clarify exactly what it is the UN understands with the peacebuilding concept, and the Peacebuilding Commission is ideally suited to be the forum where such a debate should take place.

- Our peacebuilding efforts are challenged by deep-rooted coherence dilemmas. Instead of glossing over these dilemmas, the Peacebuilding Commission should be a strategic marketplace where these dilemmas can be debated and managed.

- In order to improve the sustainability of peace operations the UN Peacebuilding Commission will need to focus on three critical areas, namely local ownership, local context and local capabilities. Peacebuilding that focus only on building the executive branch of the state is not a good recipe for a sustainable peace. Investment in the immediate aftermath of a conflict should be primarily focused on developing capacity so that societies are empowered to manage their own downstream development. Local social capital and inherent capacities should be identified, recognised and used as the basis for further development.

1. Introduction

The nexus between development, governance and security has become the central focus of the international effort to manage transitions, and peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective approach under which the dimensions of conflict management, security, humanitarian action, governance, rule of law, human rights and development can be brought together under one common framework.[1] The international

debate about the need for, and appropriate role of, peacebuilding culminated, as the centrepiece of the UN reform proposals of the 2005 World Summit, in the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

This paper is a modest attempt to take stock of what we know about peacebuilding in general, and the UN Peacebuilding Commission in particular. It aims to suggest how, in the context of the 2010 review process, the United Nations peacebuilding community can identify a few priority areas on which to focus.

This paper argues that our understanding of the peacebuilding concept is closely interlinked with our notion of sustainability. It will focus on three challenges that have the potential to significantly improve our peacebuilding practice. These three areas for review are:

> (1) Improving our understanding of the peacebuilding concept through encouraging formal and informal debate, and the institutionalisation of a specific peacebuilding model in the United Nations;
> (2) Significantly stepping up efforts to improve system-wide coherence, including our understanding of the limits of coherence; and
> (4) Meaningfully operationalising the principle of local ownership, including finding more creative ways to balance the need for predictable international models on the one hand, and local context on the other.

Taken together, these three challenges represent opportunities for policy action that have the potential to enhance our collective ability to facilitate more sustainable peacebuilding processes.

Peace-Building: The Challenges of Consistency and Sustainability", commissioned by the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations in 2008.

1   C.H. de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, Security in Practice No. 5 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2007), p.3.

2.Peacebuilding and the Sustainability Dilemma

The emergence of peacebuilding should be understood in the context of an increasingly complex and interdependent international conflict management system.

Peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective approach under which the political, security, rule of law, governance, human rights and development dimensions of these international interventions can be brought together under one common strategic framework.[2] Whilst there is no one common definition, approach or model for peacebuilding that has gained widespread acceptance, one can identify a number of common characteristics that have emerged over the last decade and a half of peacebuilding practice.[3]

The first is that peacebuilding is primarily concerned with securing or consolidating the peace. It is concerned with preventing a lapse, or relapse, into violent conflict. Peacebuilding is aimed at consolidating the peace by addressing those conflict factors that may, in the short and medium term, threaten a lapse, or relapse into conflict, as well as addressing the root causes of conflicts, that may threaten the peace over the long term. In Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, for instance, such short-term conflict factors may include land and ownership disputes, youth unemployment, poor social services and impunity caused by weak social-justice systems, whilst the root causes are related to the structural inequalities inherent in society.[4] There is thus a conflict prevention aspect that is central to our understanding of peacebuilding. However, people at all levels, including those intimately engaged with peacebuilding in the field on a daily basis, still find it difficult to make sense of the concept. On the one hand it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish from some aspects of peacekeeping in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and on the other it is difficult to distinguish from development.

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2   See for instance the 2005, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All* report of the UN Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, 2005), and the 2006, *Delivering as One* report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence (New York: United Nations, 2006).

3   Barnett, M., H. Kim, M. O'Donnell & L. Sitea, "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?", *Global Governance*, Vol. 13 No.1 (2007), p.35-58; E. McCandless, *Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings*, ISS Paper 161 (Pretoria/Tshwane: Institute for Security Studies, 2008).

4   See, for instance, *Lift Liberia, Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, (Monrovia: Government of Liberia, 2008), p.171.

The second is that peacebuilding is a multi-dimensional or system-wide undertaking that spans several dimensions. There are different models or approaches, but most range from differentiating between three core dimensions to the more elaborate that list six to eight different dimensions. The UN Secretary-General's report *No Exit without Strategy*[5] argues that peacebuilding should be understood as fostering the capacity to resolve future conflicts by: (1) consolidating security, (2) strengthening political institutions and (3) promoting economic and social reconstruction.[6] Barnett et al. refer to the same three dimensions as: (1) stability creation, (2) restoration of state institutions and (3) socioeconomic recovery.[7] The World Bank has summarised these three dimensions as (1) security, (2) governance and (3) development and its President has linked it, in the Afghanistan context, to the counterinsurgency principles of clear, hold and build.[8] These are the same three dimensions that are reflected in the so-called 3D (diplomacy, development and defence) Whole-of-Government approach.[9]

The UN's Integrated Approach opts for a more elaborate list that includes: political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects.[10] The UN's *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict* lists five areas of action, namely: (1) basic safety and security, (2) political processes, (3) basic services, (4) core government services and (4) economic revitalisation.[11] The African Union's *Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework*[12] lists five areas, which it terms constitutive elements, but it also adds gender as a self-standing element. When comparing these it becomes clear that there is broad convergence around the core dimensions of peacebuilding and these are summarised here in Table 1.

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5   *No Exit Without Strategy*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2001/394 (New York: United Nations, 20 April 2001).
6   M.W. Doyle, "The John W. Holmes Lecture: Building Peace", *Global Governance*, Vol. 13 No. 1. (2007), p.9.
7   Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell & Sitea, "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?", p.49.
8   R.B. Zoellik, *The Key to Rebuilding Afghanistan*, The Washington Post (22 August 2008), p.17.
9   S. Patrick & K. Brown, *Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Assessing "Whole of Government" Approaches to Fragile States* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), p.56.
10 Revised *Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions*, dated 17 January 2006, and released under a Note from the Secretary-General on 9 February 2006 (New York: United Nations, 2006).
11 *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict*, S/2009/304 (New York: United Nations, 11 June 2009).
12 AU, Policy Framework for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2006).

Table 1: The Dimensions of Peacebuilding

Security & Rule of Law	Providing a Safe and Secure Environment
	Protection of Civilians
	Mine Action
	Security Sector Reform
	Disarmament & Demobilisation
	Police, Corrections & Judicial Reform (Rule of Law)
Political & Governance	Support the Peace Process & Oversee the Political Transition
	Political Participation, National Dialogue & Reconciliation
	Electoral Capacity Building and Oversight (Observation)
	State and Government Institutions, Public Administration & Civil Service Capacity Building (Governance)
	Extend State Authority throughout the Territory
	Conflict Management Capacity
Socio-economic Recovery	Physical Infrastructure: Roads, Ports, Airports, Electricity, Telecommunications
	Social Services: Health, Education, Social Welfare, Population Registration
	Stimulating and Facilitating Economic Growth and Employment
	Strengthening Civil Society
Human Rights	Human Rights Education, Advocacy and Monitoring
Humanitarian Assistance	Emergency and Early Recovery Services in the Areas of Food, Water & Sanitation, Shelter, Health, Protection and Returns of Refugees/IDPs

Humanitarian assistance should be highlighted as one function that is treated differently in the various models. There is widespread recognition that it is independent from the other functions in that it does not share peacebuilding's essential conflict prevention objective. [13] Some models, including the UN's Integrated Approach, nevertheless include humanitarian assistance within peacebuilding as a function that takes place independently, but parallel to, the other peacebuilding dimensions. The UN approach argues that it needs to be included in the overall framework in order to be factored into planning and coordination mechanisms.[14]

The third aspect relates to the tension that exists between independence and interdependence. The various peacebuilding actors exist as independent agents with their own mandates, programmes and resources, and yet they are also interdependent on each other to achieve their respective objectives, and that of the overall peacebuilding undertaking. Most peacebuilding-related programmes only make sense as part of a larger system of related programmes. Disarmament and demobilisation programmes, for instance, rely on the assumption that others will provide a series of reintegration programmes, and they all rely on the assumption that there are other programmes in place that will create security, improve opportunities for education and healthcare, and create employment for ex-combatants or alternative opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Such a network of programmes exist both as independent programmes with their own sources of funding and separate implementing arrangements, and as a network of interdependent programmes whose combined output produces an outcome that their individual efforts could not have achieved independently. This duality between the independence and interdependence of the various programmes, agents and dimensions that constitute the peacebuilding system lies at the core of the coherence dilemma. This tension can not be resolved only managed on a case-by-case basis taking into account the local context, and pursuing coherence is thus about managing interdependences at a specific point in space and time.

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[13] Various models, such as: The *Utstein* Report (D. Smith, *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*, Overview Report of the Joint *Utstein* Study on Peacebuilding, Evaluation Report 1/2004 (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004), the UN's Integrated Approach (*Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions*) and NEPAD's *Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework for Africa* include humanitarian assistance. Many in the humanitarian community argue, however, that humanitarian assistance fall outside the scope of peacebuilding, and should not be included in peacebuilding models. See for instance E.A. Weir, *Conflict and Compromise: UN Integrated Missions and the Humanitarian Imperative,* Monograph No. 4, (Accra: KAIPTC, May 2006). The humanitarian dimension is included as part of the larger peacebuilding framework throughout this paper and in Table 1, as per the UN concept, with due regard for the principle of the independence of humanitarian action, as recognised in paragraph 10 of the *Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions.*

[14] *Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions*, Issued by the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, 9 December 2005) and *Decision Number 2008/24 – Integration,* Decisions of the Secretary-General, Policy Committee (New York: United Nations, 25 June 2008).

The fourth aspect relates to our perspective of time. It is now recognised that peacebuilding is a long-term process, and that a longer and more sustained international commitment is more necessary than was understood a decade ago.[15] Failures to sustain the international engagement in countries like Haiti, Liberia and Sierra Leone were seen as an important factor in the relapse into violent conflict experienced in these cases. A causal link was thus made between sustained international attention and lasting peace processes. This longer-term time frame for peacebuilding was agreed on at the World Summit in 2005 and resulted in the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, with the aim of ensuring that the international community in general, and the UN in particular, remains engaged in countries during the peacebuilding stage.[16]

This was regarded as necessary because the UN Security Council's attention tended to be focused on those crises where the UN has a direct stake, usually in the form of a UN peacekeeping operation. When such operations came to an end, the countries in question moved off the Security Council agenda. The UN Peacebuilding Commission now represents not only a specific focus on peacebuilding, but it also helps to keep countries where there no longer is a UN peacekeeping presence, but where the peace is still fragile and reversible, on the UN agenda.

After the first five years of the UN Peacebuilding Commission one can argue that this approach has had the desired effect in Burundi and Sierra Leone. Whilst both peace processes are still fragile, and thus not yet self-sustainable, the UN Peacebuilding Commission has been able to keep them on the agenda of the UN system. In so doing, the PBC has ensured that they have received more international and regional attention and focus than would otherwise have been the case, and this has contributed to preventing a relapse into conflict over this period.[17]

There is also a recognition that although peacebuilding requires a long-term commitment, there is also a need for immediate and short-term gains to solidify the peace, build confidence in the peace process and stimulate a vision of a better future.[18] This has resulted in practices such as the now standard inclusion of funds for quick impact pro-

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[15] N. Tschirgi, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges*, p.9.

[16] *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (New York: United Nations, 2004) and *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All*.

[17] *Taking Stock, Looking Forward: A Strategic Review of the Peacebuilding Commission* (New York: New York University's Center on International Cooperations and the International Peace Institute, April 2008), p.16.

[18] M. Wesley, "The State of the Art on the Art of State Building", *Global Governance 14 (2008), p.377.*

jects in UN peacekeeping budgets,[19] and an acceptance that some aspects of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), Rule of Law (RoL) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) should be funded out of the assessed contributions to the UN peacekeeping operations budget. In fact, the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, of June 2009, focuses exclusively on this part of the peacebuilding agenda of the UN.[20] More needs to be done to give meaning to the urgent need for short-term peace dividends, but the immediate aftermath of conflict has been the traditional area of focus of the UN Security Council, at least from a peace and security perspective. The Secretary-General's report is thus a useful reminder of the importance of laying a firm foundation for sustainable peacebuilding, and not missing many opportunities in these early phases to capitalise on the goodwill and momentum of the peace process.

This section attempted to summarise some of the major developments in peacebuilding thinking over the last half decade. However, the number of peace processes that have relapsed into conflict, and the number of situations that are still highly fragile, remind us that there still are more questions than answers, and that we need to give urgent and focused attention to a number of critical aspects of international peacebuilding, if we want to improve the success rate, sustainability and overall impact of our peacebuilding efforts. In the next section we will focus on the first of the three areas this paper will address, namely the need to improve and expand our understanding of the UN approach to peacebuilding so that it can become a meaningful platform for sustained action.

3. The Need for a Conceptual and Operational UN Peacebuilding Model

The term peacebuilding was introduced in 1992 by then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in *An Agenda for Peace*, as: "action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict".[21] Peacebuilding was explained as "the counterpart of preventive diplomacy", where pre-

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[19] UN, '*Policy Directive on Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)*', Department of Peacekeeping Operations (New York: United Nations, 12 February 2007).
[20] *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict*, A/63/881 (New York: United Nations, 2009).
[21] UN, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992), para.21

ventive diplomacy was seen as action aimed at avoiding a crisis whilst peacebuilding is aimed at preventing a recurrence.[22] In the *Agenda for Peace,* conflict prevention and peacebuilding was thus juxtaposed at the opposite ends of the conflict management spectrum, with preventive diplomacy representing the first or opening stage of an intervention, and peacebuilding the last or closing stage.

According to this model, the UN response to conflict, in its simplest form, is first to prevent conflict (preventive diplomacy). If that fails, the next step is to make peace (peacemaking) by gathering all the parties around the negotiation table. If a cease-fire or an agreement is reached, the UN could deploy a peacekeeping mission to monitor the cease-fire and to otherwise assist with the implementation of the agreement. Lastly, the UN will assist to rebuild the country with a specific focus on addressing the root causes of the conflict so as to ensure that the conflict does not re-occur again (peacebuilding).

This original conceptualisation and chronological model have an enduring impact and many people at the policy, funding and operational level still have these original concepts in mind when working with conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues. In fact, the UN Secretariat has institutionalised the model, with separate departments for prevention and peacemaking, peacekeeping and, with the new Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), now also for peacebuilding. Bureaucratic dynamics among these units ensure that there is a healthy dose of competition for resources and influence among them, and although they cooperate in many meaningful ways, these tendencies also reinforce their different identities and thus the very notion that prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are separate phases or facets of the peace process.

However, over the past decade and a half our understanding of the peace instruments highlighted in the *Agenda for Peace* has been refined through practice and analysis, and they are now broadly understood to be interdependent and interlinked aspects of the same process, rather than chronological steps or stages in a linear conflict management continuum. In this context there is a need to revisit and clarify exactly what it is that the various actors, and especially the United Nations, understand with the peacebuilding concept. This is not merely of academic interest. Conceptual confusion leads to policy vagueness, duplication, omission and competition. It complicates resource mobilisation and causes budgetary confusion, and at the operational level it contributes to inefficiency and ineffectiveness, and thus ultimately to loss of impact and sustainability.

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22   *An Agenda for Peace*, para. 57.

We should also not shy away from the fact that the way peacebuilding is understood is not only a technical debate, but also a political issue. The debate should thus not be confined to those professionally engaged in peacebuilding. It should first and foremost be actively pursued as an international diplomatic debate. When the peacebuilding concept was introduced in *An Agenda for Peace,* it reflected an optimism that existed in the immediate post-Cold War period for collective third party intervention.[23] There was a sense in the period between the end of the Cold War and before 9/11, that collective third party peacebuilding could represent a new era of benevolent international intervention.

The sense of optimism has since evaporated and has been replaced by a largely divided perception of peacebuilding. Some in the North, for instance the G8+, view peacebuilding as a tool for managing failed or failing states, and assisting them with establishing the values and structures that typify liberal-market democracies, which those in the North view as synonymous with responsible and stable sovereignty.[24] Some in the South, for instance those leading the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77, are sceptical and view peacebuilding as having the potential to harbour a new form of colonialism, which if unchecked, can result in the neo-imperialist and capitalist exploitation of vulnerable post-conflict societies.[25] It is important not to shy away from this debate, but to create forums where those with opposing views can shape each other's understanding of peacebuilding, and where the different schools of thought can develop a better understanding of the interests and issues that drive their respective approaches to peacebuilding.

The international community in general, and the UN in particular, will find it difficult to develop a coherent peacebuilding system in the context of a deeply divided international diplomatic community. At worse, the UN may find itself back in the Cold War context where contradictory interests and disagreement over the concept, content and process of peacebuilding, for instance among members of the UN Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, prevent the international community, and especially the UN, from taking coherent action.

The core of this debate should take place in the UN Peacebuilding Commission, but the Commission should also encourage and facilitate the debate in various regional forums, within the academic commu-

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[23] N. Tschirgi, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges*, p.2.

[24] R. Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); M. Barnett, H. Kim, M. O'Donnell & L. Sitea, "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?".

[25] R. Paris, T.D. Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), p.9.

nity, among civil society and within the context of the national dialogues that should shape the future of countries emerging out of conflict. There seems to be a tendency to avoid these debates for fear of stimulating confrontation among UN Member States, but the reality is that the Member States are polarised on these issues into the broad North/G8+ vs. South/NAM/G77 groupings, and that without debate, they are trapped into these positions without having the opportunity to educate each other about the reasons why these groupings have such divergent views on these matters. It is understandable why the UN Peacebuilding Commission shied away from being the forum for this debate during the first five years of its existence, but there are several reasons why it should now take on this task as a central focus of its agenda and role.

Firstly, the current lack of a common understanding of what UN peacebuilding entails and how it should be pursued has been a major contributing factor to incoherent international and national action, and has ultimately contributed to a poor record of sustainability. Secondly, the UN Peacebuilding Commission is the only UN body focused solely on peacebuilding and there is thus no other body in the UN system where this debate should rather take place. Thirdly, the UN Peacebuilding Commission represents a neutral meeting ground between the interests and issues normally dealt with by the UN Security Council and ECOSOC, between North and South, and between the internal and external actors. This is one of the greatest comparative advantages of the Peacebuilding Commission and this unique position should be used to facilitate and encourage dialogue amongst these key stakeholders. And lastly, peacebuilding is not a static concept that can be defined by a committee, endorsed by an assembly and then operationalised. It needs to be continuously refined, improved and operationalised. In fact, as the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission has shown to date, there is a degree to which peacebuilding will take on a unique meaning in every specific context that it is applied, and this duality and tension between what is common and what is context-specific, is partly what needs to be captured in our refined understanding of what peacebuilding is. The Commission is ideally placed to take on the task of developing and refining a conceptual and operational model of peacebuilding for the UN system, and this should be a responsibility that is central to its long-term work plan and identity.

The UN Policy Committee, in its May 2007 deliberations, approved a useful working definition of peacebuilding: "Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to

the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national owner-ship, and should comprise a carefully prioritised, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives."[26]

In broad terms we can thus say that peacebuilding aims to consolidate and institutionalise peace by undertaking a range of actions that go beyond merely preventing violence (negative peace).[27] It aims to ad-dress the underlying root causes of conflict and to create the condi-tions for a just social order (positive peace).[28] However, this broad understanding of peacebuilding becomes confused when, in practice, we use the same peacebuilding concept in two very different opera-tional models, namely targeted and systemic peacebuilding. Much of the conceptual confusion comes about when these two distinct opera-tional models of peacebuilding are muddled together, and the UN Peacebuilding Commission is well placed to consider these two mod-els and how they are interrelated. In fact, the Peacebuilding Commis-sion itself struggled with these two concepts and found, for instance in Burundi, that its work at the level of the Integrated Peacebuilding Framework on the one hand, and at the level of the Peacebuilding Fund on the other, brought these two distinct, but interrelated ap-proaches to peacebuilding in conflict with one another. The Peace-building Commission will thus have to resolve the tension between these two models, both within its own work, as well as in the guidance it generates for the UN system as a whole.

Targeted Peacebuilding

Targeted peacebuilding refers to activities aimed at addressing urgent or imminent risks to the peace process, and it usually takes the form of a specific time-bound programme aimed at addressing a particular need or risk. These can be identified as short- to medium-term conflict factors that may potentially impact negatively on the peace process, and that can be addressed through specific targeted programme re-sponses. This is also referred to as preventative peacebuilding or in-strumental peacebuilding in that it refers to programming that is meant to avoid a relapse into conflict. Some donors now have funds specifi-cally earmarked for peacebuilding, and those funds would most likely be used to finance specific programmes in this category. The activities supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund typically also fall in this category and are aimed at addressing specific peace consolidation

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26 Quoted in E. McCandless, *Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings*, 2.

27 C. Call, *The Problem of Peacebuilding: How UN Thinking has Evolved in Recent Years* (New York: DPA, 2004).

28 For an explanation of negative and positive peace, see J. Galtung, "Twenty-five years of peace research: ten challenges and some responses", *Journal of Peace Research*, 22(2) (1985).

needs that have either remained unfunded, or under-funded, or that have newly emerged.

The time frame for targeted peacebuilding is necessarily short- to medium-term, because it is focused on immediate or imminent threats to the peace process. Examples of targeted peacebuilding programmes include conflict resolution training and capacity building, the development of institutional capabilities needed for conflict prevention, such as the Peace Commission in Southern Sudan or the Ituri Pacification Commission, support for civil society or women's groups to participate in peacemaking initiatives, and support for national reconciliation initiatives, including aspects of transitional justice. Some donors would also include support for specific programme activities that form part of, or support, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), Rule of Law (RoL) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) in this peacebuilding category. However, in Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia we have also noted that some of the activities earmarked in this category may appear to be very similar to traditional development categories, such as youth employment, infrastructure development and basic social services. This is because the frustrations with the lack of progress in these areas have become so critical in some of these communities that it has become a source of a potential relapse into violent conflict, and urgent action is required to show that some of these needs are being met.

Some donors do not earmark funds specifically for peacebuilding, but prefer to encourage a conflict-sensitive approach to development when working in conflict- affected countries. Conflict-sensitive development programmes have a developmental objective, for example, poverty reduction, but are sensitive to the conflict environment within which they operate, in that specific steps are taken in the design and management of the programme to avoid aggravating the situation. In some cases, the design of the programme can also be intended to proactively support conflict prevention efforts, and in the latter case such activities are almost indistinguishable from targeted peacebuilding.[29]

An important prerequisite for a targeted peacebuilding approach is an understanding of the risks to the peace process, and the conflict factors that characterise the conflict system. A Post-Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) or another form of risk analysis should be undertaken as part of the process leading up to the design of appropriate targeted peacebuilding programmes. It is thus important to work towards a common understanding of what the conflict factors in a particular context are, from the earliest planning stages and continuously throughout

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[29] M.B. Anderson, *Do No Harm, How Aid can Support Peace or War* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

the life cycle of the peacebuilding system.[30] Funding for, and capacity building towards, effective participation in a PCIA approach could also be regarded as a targeted peacebuilding activity. As with most of these processes the real value does not lie so much in the end-product, e.g. the PCIA report, but rather in the sustained focused interaction among stakeholders that was necessary to generate the product, because this process of interaction among stakeholders leads to an improved and nuanced understanding of each other, and the situation at hand, and that deeper level of insight will have numerous spin-offs far beyond just the PCIA report. A network is created in the process, and the members of the network can continue to work together, or in smaller hubs, to resolve or manage issues that may subsequently emerge.

Systemic Peacebuilding

Systemic peacebuilding, on the other hand, emerges out of the total combined effort of the activities undertaken under the various peace-building dimensions introduced earlier (see Table 1), and thus exists in the form of a system-wide or holistic process. This overall effort may sometimes be described as a strategy or vision, for example, in an integrated strategic framework such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in Liberia or the Afghan Compact. There may be specific processes and structures that facilitate the development, management and monitoring of such peacebuilding frameworks and these may be purposely funded.[31] In general, however, support for systemic peace-building occurs in a highly fragmented manner in that the various agencies that participate in, and contribute to, the overall process, each independently design, manage, monitor, evaluate and secure funding for their individual programmes. These activities are not necessarily identified as, or funded as, peacebuilding activities at the programme level, although some of the programmes discussed in the targeted peacebuilding section may be. Instead, they would be considered and funded as, for instance, development, human rights, or Rule of Law activities. It is when these activities are considered together, in the context of their combined and cumulative effect, over time, that their systemic peacebuilding identity emerges.[32]

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[30] E. McCandless, *Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings*, p.15.

[31] For instance, the Implementation and Monitoring Committee (RIMCO) of the Results Focussed Transitional Framework in Liberia (C.H. de Coning, *Civil-Military Coordination in United Nations and African Peace Operations* (Durban: ACCORD, 2007), p.60, or the more recent Joint UN and Government of Liberia Joint Steering Committee that manages the Peacebuilding Fund's $15 million grant for Liberia (E. McCandless, *Lessons from Liberia: Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding in Transitional Settings*, p.7).

[32] de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, p.14.

A strategic or integrated framework that is aimed at an overall strategic vision for the systemic peacebuilding process, such as a conflict sensitive PRS, maps out the overall priorities and objectives of the systemic peacebuilding strategy for a particular country. Recent examples include the Results Focussed Transitional Framework (RFTF), interim IRSP and RSP in Liberia, the Peace Consolidation Strategy and PRSP in Sierra Leone, and the Integrated Peacebuilding Framework in Burundi. Individual programmes become part of the systemic peacebuilding process when they contribute to, and are considered as part of, the overall effort directed towards achieving the objectives set out in the strategic vision. In some cases the individual agencies and activities may be conscious of their role in the overall framework, but in some cases this linkage is drawn only at the systemic level, for instance in strategic evaluations or in annual PRS reports.[33] This does not imply that the connections are artificial, but rather that those at the programme level are not always aware of the degree to which their individual activities contribute to an overall systemic peacebuilding framework.

There is debate over the extent to which a development activity such as poverty reduction or infrastructure development, e.g. the construction of a road, can be regarded as having a conflict prevention objective, and thus be considered to be part of a peacebuilding framework. The confusion lies in the perspective and context. An individual donor or implementing agent may not think of, or categorise the funding of, for example, the construction of a road, as peacebuilding from a programme level perspective. However, from a systemic perspective, e.g. in the context of an integrated peacebuilding framework, the construction of roads may be regarded as an important element of a larger systemic peacebuilding framework. It may create work, including for ex-combatants, it may stimulate local economies and improve livelihoods by providing access to markets, it may stimulate local contractor capacity, it may open up outlying areas previously marginalised because of their inaccessibility, and assist in the extension of the authority of the state into those territories, and it may contribute to overall economic growth, all of which are important aspects of an environment conducive to a successful peace process and thus preventing a relapse into conflict.

If the Peacebuilding Commission is serious about addressing the sustainability dilemma of peacebuilding action then it should start by tackling this conceptual dilemma and its operational implementations head-on. The UN system needs conceptual clarity and a common un-

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[33]   The *Utstein* Study found that more than 55% of the programmes it evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy (D. Smith, *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*, p.16).

derstanding of the UN's approach to peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Commission, with support from the Peacebuilding Support Office, should be the principle policy-making body on peacebuilding in the UN system, and in so doing, should be responsible for conceptualising peacebuilding in the UN context, and for determining overall UN strategy and policy direction on peacebuilding in the UN system.

This implies that the principle function of the Peacebuilding Commission should be to produce strategic direction and supporting policies on peacebuilding to the UN system. It also implies that the Peacebuilding Support Office should have the resources and skill set to support the Commission in carrying out this function, and that it should, in addition, be the main repository for expert knowledge on peacebuilding in the UN system. One of the important functions of the Peacebuilding Support Office should thus be to identify and research lessons and best practices, and to transform these into policy advice.

4. The Need for Enhanced Coherence as a Critical Factor in Sustainable Peacebuilding

A large number of evaluation reports[34] and research studies[35] that have analysed the record of post-Cold War peacebuilding efforts have identified significant problems with coherence and coordination, and have found that this has contributed to the poor rate of sustainability of these operations to date. For example, the Joint *Utstein* Study of peacebuilding, that analysed 336 peacebuilding projects implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway over the last decade, has identified a lack of coherence at the strategic level, what it terms a strategic deficit, as the most significant obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding.[36] The *Utstein* study found that more than 55%

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34 Amongst others, A. Cutillo, *International Assistance to Countries Emerging from Conflict: A Review of Fifteen Years of Interventions and the Future of Peacebuilding* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2006); N. Dahrendorf, *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change* (London: King's College, 2003); and A. Donini, *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda*, Occasional Paper #22, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies (Providence: Brown University, 2002).

35 For instance, Dobbins et al., *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From Congo to Iraq* (Washington D.C: Rand Corporation, 2005); R. Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*; and S.J. Stedman, E. Cousens & D. Rothchild (eds.), *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

36 Smith, *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*, p.16.

of the programmes it evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy.

The need for, and benefits of, improved coherence is widely accepted today in the international multilateral governance context. There is now broad consensus that inconsistent policies and fragmented programmes entail a higher risk of duplication, inefficient spending, a lower quality of service, difficulty in meeting goals and, ultimately, reduced capacity for delivery, and thus impact.[37] In this paper, 'coherence' is understood as the effort to direct the wide range of activities undertaken in the political, governance, development, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system towards common strategic objectives.[38]

There is a widely held assumption that a more coherent approach, that manages to produce a comprehensive and coordinated system-wide effort, will have a more relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable impact on any given peacebuilding process. It is important to recognise, however, that the highly dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems implies that coherence can never be fully attained.[39] It is possible, however, to distinguish between systems where there is less, or more, coherence, and pursuing coherence should thus be understood as an aspiration that can be measured only in degree, not in end states.

Coherence also needs to be understood in the context of the natural tensions and inherent contradictions between the various peacebuilding dimensions and among the different peacebuilding actors.[40] The agencies that are responsible for programmes and campaigns may often have to settle for 'second best' or 'partially coherent' solutions in order to establish a workable foundation for cooperation.[41]

We can distinguish between four elements of coherence in the peacebuilding context, namely: (1) agency coherence, i.e. consistency among the policies and actions of an individual agency, including the internal consistency of a specific policy or programme; (2) whole-of-government coherence, i.e. consistency among the policies and actions of the different government agencies of a country; (3) external coherence, i.e. consistency among the policies pursued by the various inter-

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[37] OECD, "Policy Coherence: Vital for Global Development", *OECD Observer* (2003). Available on www.oecd.org, accessed on 10 May 2007.

[38] de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, p.4.

[39] P. Cilliers, "Why We Cannot Know Complex Things Completely", *Emergence*, 4 (1/2) (2002), p.83.

[40] Paris & Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding*.

[41] de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, p.4

national actors in a given country context (harmonisation); and (4) internal/external coherence, i.e. consistency between the policies of the local and international actors in a given country context (alignment).

Agency Coherence

Agency coherence refers to consistency among the policies and actions of an individual agency, including the internal consistency of a specific policy or programme. Consistency in this context refers to one agency working at cross-purposes with itself. This does not imply that there is no room for differences and debate during the policy formulation and review process, but once a policy or intervention has been agreed on it needs to be implemented in such a way that all the different elements of the agency contribute to the overall objective in a complementary fashion.

Whole-of-Government Coherence

Whole-of-government coherence refers to consistency among the policies and actions of different departments and agencies of the same government or multilateral institution. The Canadian Government's so-called 3D (diplomacy, development and defence) concept is the classical example, and is aimed at ensuring that its peacebuilding interventions are supported coherently by all the relevant arms of government.[42] At the multilateral level the United Nations, European Union, African Union and NATO are each engaged in various initiatives aimed at improving coherence. Integration was one of the central themes of the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the so-called Brahimi Report.[43] The Secretary-General, in his comments on the Report, called for a plan that can help the different parts of the UN system to work together to develop country-specific peacebuilding strategies that are coherent, flexible and field driven.[44] The UN's Integrated Approach, that has subsequently been developed, refers to a specific type of operational process and design, where the planning and coordination processes of the different elements of the UN family are integrated into a single country-level UN system, when it undertakes complex peacekeeping operations.[45] The UN Peacebuilding Commission can play an important role in facilitating and encouraging whole-of-government coherence in the UN system when it comes to peacebuilding.

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[42] Patrick & Brown, *Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Assessing "Whole of Government" Approaches to Fragile States*, p.56.
[43] UN, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*.
[44] UN, *Review of Technical Cooperation in the United Nations*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/58/382 (New York: United Nations, 19 September 2003).
[45] UN, *Decision Number 2008/24 – Integration*.

External Coherence

External coherence refers to the harmonisation of policies and actions among the external actors in a given country context. One area which is particularly relevant is the relationship among donors, both bilateral and multilateral, and addresses the need for donors to harmonise their policies and practices so as to limit the transaction costs associated with their support. The Peacebuilding Commission provides the donor community with an additional meeting place where they can further improve their attempts to foster coherence. The added advantage of the Peacebuilding Commission is that it provides a forum not only for the security-development linkages, and the internal-external debate, but it also brings all donors interested in a specific country together.

Internal/External Coherence

Internal/External coherence refers to the alignment of the policies and actions between internal and external actors, especially at the strategic framework level, in a given country context. The need for overall strategic frameworks is widely recognised and accepted but poorly applied in practice. As the *Utstein* and other recent studies sited have pointed out, the lack of a clearly articulated overall strategy is, in fact, a critical shortcoming in most past and contemporary peacebuilding systems. The first prerequisite for coherence in any peacebuilding system is the development of an overall strategic framework. Without it the various peacebuilding agents have no benchmark against which they can judge the degree to which they are coherent with each other in the context of an overall strategic framework.[46] The degree to which such strategic frameworks are currently absent goes a long way to explaining the lack of coherence evident in past and present peacebuilding systems. The work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in the context of internal/external coherence and strategic frameworks are thus critical for sustainable peacebuilding, and should be an important part of its long-term agenda.

Limits of Coherence

Persistent evidence-based feedback from the field indicates that at the operational and tactical levels, many of the assumptions we have about coherence are, at best challenged, and at worse, flawed. The research and evaluation data sited earlier in this paper indicate that peacebuilding efforts appear to be challenged by enduring and deep-rooted coherence and coordination dilemmas. For instance, Paris and Sisk argue that peacebuilding should be understood as inherently contradictory, with competing imperatives facing the internal and external

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[46] de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, p.16.

actors, both between and among themselves, that constitute "vexing policy dilemmas", that require trade-offs between multiple mandates, needs and priorities without any obvious solutions.[47]

The empirical and theoretical evidence thus indicate that there is much less room for coherence than generally acknowledged at the policy level. The result is that the policy debate is setting itself overly ambitious targets for coherence that is impossible to achieve in reality. A more realistic understanding of the limitations of coherence and the inherent contradictions in the system will allow the international community to adopt a more sober approach to coherence and to set itself more humble goals. The UN Peacebuilding Commission would need to address this dilemma in its quest to develop a common UN system-wide approach to peacebuilding, and recognise that one of its own roles in this process is to provide a neutral and impartial marketplace where trade-offs and transactions among stakeholders can take place in a relatively safe and controlled environment.

5. The Importance of Local Context and Local Ownership in Ensuring Sustainable Peacebuilding

There is wide recognition that externally driven peacebuilding processes are unsustainable.[48] Whilst some argue for autonomous recovery[49], most developing and developed countries favour peacebuilding systems that are informed and determined by local context and supported by international expertise and resources.[50] From this perspective, local context means that peacebuilding activities should be needs-based, and the priorities, sequencing and pace of delivery need to be informed by the dynamics of the host system, not by those providing assistance and support, through local ownership and meaningful internal/external coordination. Achieving a balanced and meaningful partnership between internal and external peacebuilding agents is thus one of the most important success factors for any peacebuilding

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[47] Paris & Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding*, p.1.

[48] See *Building Effective Partnerships: Improving the Relationship between Internal and External Actors in Post-Conflict Countries* (New York: Peacebuilding Forum Conference, 7 October 2004), p.2.

[49] J.M. Weinstein, *Autonomous Recovery and International Intervention in Comparative Perspective*, Working Paper 57 (Washington D.C.: Center for Global Development (CGD), April 2005)

[50] As evidenced by the parties to and content of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*.

system. It is also one of the most difficult to achieve. In order to improve the sustainability of peace operations, the Peacebuilding Commission will need to make progress on three critical areas, namely local ownership, local context and local capabilities.

Local Ownership and State Formation

Local ownership in this context means that the future direction of a particular country is in the hands of the people of that country or, put differently, is not determined by external actors. One would imagine that a period of social upheaval and renewal should result in a new social contract among the people that address the shortcomings of the past and determine their common understanding of the role of the state and the relationship among the different communities that make up the society.

In most contemporary peacebuilding systems, however, the focus has been on state building rather than state formation.[51] The difference is that the former is focussed on the technical apparatus of the state, such as the security services, whilst the latter is aimed at facilitating the 'social contract' between the people and the state and addressing the way in which a state is formed and how it relates to the people. State formation is concerned with aspects such as the separation of powers and the checks and balances on the powers of the various elements of the state.

State building is too often narrowly focused on the executive branch. Peacebuilding today is overly associated with security sector reform and rule of law. These areas are popular because they are technical and lend themselves easily to the kind of programmatic interventions the external actors are used to. Most importantly they are not controversial and thus welcomed by the governments in power. The result is that external actors invest in the instruments of governance, instead of the elements of the state, and this leaves the executive, and thus any government that comes to power, in a position where it is not adequately kept in check by the legislative and judicial branches of the state. Peacebuilding that focuses only on the executive branch of the state is not a good recipe for a sustainable peace process, and may sow the seeds of future discontent.[52]

The UN Peacebuilding Commission should refocus the local ownership debate around state formation, rather than state building, and find innovative ways of facilitating the development of new social con-

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[51] OECD, 2008, *Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience*, Off-print of the Journal of Development, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 13.
[52] Greg Mills, "What the West Needs in Afghanistan: Humility", *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 August 2009.

tracts among people and state in the countries it is engaged with. In this context the Commission needs to encourage processes that make the leadership accountable to the people, not to the international community. This implies a shift away from state building towards state formation, and will require an investment in facilitating national dialogue, and the development or reform of constitutional frameworks. It also implies a renewed focus on aspects such as strengthening the overall sociopolitical framework, for instance the division of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial, and the strengthening of civil society and social capital in the form of a free press, a free and independent judiciary, as well as human rights, electoral and other independent commissions that perform a vital role in the functioning of the overall sociopolitical framework.

Local Context and External Legitimacy

Local context means that peacebuilding needs to be informed by local, not international, needs, priorities and context. Again this is an obvious principle that few will challenge, but in reality it is so difficult to achieve that few have actually managed. There are two forces that work against this principle. The first is that the local actors are in disarray in the immediate aftermath of conflict and their ability to articulate a coherent set of needs and priorities remains weak for years thereafter. The second is that the external actors have a well-resourced and internationally legitimised system that thinks it is acting on local needs, when in fact, it is overtly influenced by previous experiences and internationally generated models and theories of change.[53]

The international community should step back into a facilitation role, so that local actors can fill the vacuum and inform the needs analysis. Local actors must be empowered and encouraged to identify and articulate their needs and priorities. International actors need to be trained in understanding and countering their own tendency to replicate their last experience elsewhere and to overwhelm, or drown out the local voices. They need to be trained how best to facilitate and encourage local voices and capacities without undermining them. And local actors need to be trained and encouraged in how to identify and articulate local needs and priorities, how to facilitate local dialogues and discussions that can identify needs and priorities and how to reach out to and empower all the voices in society, including those that may not normally be heard in official discussions.

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[53] Ole Jacob Sending, Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context, Security in Practice 1/2009, NUPI Working Paper 755 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs), p.6.

The true implications of taking local context into account may be difficult for the external system to accept. Local needs and priorities may be different from what the international system is willing or able to provide. Promoting norms that have a high priority for the donor community, such as human rights and gender equality may not be a priority for the local community, and the international community may not have the technical expertise or systems to provide support for local priorities such as small-scale animal husbandry and agriculture. At another level, local priorities my result in different time scales than what the international community is used to. For instance, local leaders may seek an upfront investment in capacity building prior to implementation of various medium- to long-term governance and development initiatives, so that these programmes can be managed by local managers, whilst the international community may be under pressure to launch such programmes earlier in the process.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission should take on the responsibility of tackling the vexing policy dilemmas generated by the implications and challenges of the local context debate. It can provide a space where they can be discussed and transacted, and it can be a forum for knowledge generation and research. None of the stakeholders benefits from leaving these issues unaddressed, especially if sustainable peacebuilding is acknowledged as the common objective.

Local Capacities and Social Capital

Local capabilities in this context imply the recognition that any society has developed a range of coping mechanisms that have been shaped and formed by local context and that can be utilised to manage or support processes aimed at dealing with various social challenges. The challenge is how to identify and work with such local capacities, without supporting or further entrenching the inequalities in the society that may have contributed to the conflict. Peacebuilding tends to replace local social capital with external models or perceptions of the state, and the result it that we tend to undermine or destroy the little capacity that exists in a society and replace it with a weak and dysfunctional new capacity. We need to find new and innovative ways of working with existing social capacities, and perhaps transforming from within those that are problematic, rather than replacing them outright with new untested systems that then fail to provide an alternative service.

For instance, state building tends to generate new or reformed central state capacities, especially in the rule of law and security contexts, and we tend to de-legitimise and sometimes even criminalise existing local social capacities in the form of traditional justice systems and local

security arrangements, without ensuring that an adequate alternative is in place. The net result is a drop in overall capacity because we are weakening the existing social capacity before offering a viable, credible and legitimate alternative. Whilst it may be the case that the existing structures are weak and unsatisfactory, at least they provide some level of service that should not be disrupted until such time as a better alternative is in place. An alternative approach may be to develop new systems that compliment and build on existing social systems, rather than replacing them. Where existing social systems are regarded as inappropriate, they can be encouraged to transform over time but one needs to recognise that such change needs to occur at a pace acceptable to the local community for it to be sustainable.

Capacity building needs to be transformed from the existing paradigm of replacing local capacity to one where existing local capacities are recognised as the basis from which new capacities can be developed. This approach should be informed by a recognition that local capacities have been shaped by local historic and sociocultural contexts that make it uniquely suited to the local context, and thus locally legitimate. New untested capacities need to earn local legitimacy before replacing existing local capacities.

Capacity building is a critical aspect of peacebuilding and the UN Peacebuilding Commission can work together with existing knowledge centres in, for instance, the UN Development Programme, to generate knowledge on capacity building in the specific peacebuilding context, and can then serve as a vehicle to disseminate this knowledge to stakeholders and to inform its work. Capacity building needs to be transformed from its current predominantly North-South knowledge and skills transfer approach to one where the local social capital and inherent capacities are recognised and used as a basis for further development.

6. Conclusion

This paper has focused on three challenges that should inform the 2010 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, namely:

> (1) Improving our understanding of the peacebuilding concept through encouraging formal and informal debate, and the institutionalisation of a specific peacebuilding model for the UN system;

(2) Significantly stepping up efforts to improve system-wide coherence, including our understanding of the limits of coherence; and
(3) Meaningfully operationalising the principle of local ownership, including finding more creative ways to balance the need for predictable international models on the one hand, and local context on the other.

There is a need to revisit and clarify exactly what it is the United Nations understands with the peacebuilding concept. We should not shy away from the fact that this is not only a technical debate, but also a political issue. The debate should thus first and foremost be actively pursued as an international diplomatic debate. The UN Peacebuilding Commission is ideally suited to be the forum where such a debate should take place.

Persistent evidence-based feedback from the field suggests that many of our underlying assumptions about coherence and integration are, at best challenged, and at worse, flawed. Our peacebuilding efforts are challenged by enduring and deep-rooted coherence and coordination dilemmas. There are pervasive fundamental differences in the mandates, value systems and core principles of some of the peacebuilding actors that cannot be resolved, only managed. The UN Peacebuilding Commission should provide a neutral and impartial marketplace where these trade-offs and transactions among stakeholders can take place in a relatively safe and controlled environment.

Externally driven peacebuilding processes are unsustainable. In order to improve the sustainability of peace operations, the UN Peacebuilding Commission will need to focus on three critical areas, namely local ownership, local context and local capabilities. Local context means that peacebuilding activities should be needs-based, and the priorities, sequencing and pace of delivery need to be informed by the dynamics of the host system. Peacebuilding that focuses only on the executive branch of the state is not a good recipe for a sustainable peace process, and may sow the seeds of future discontent. International pressure to invest heavily in the immediate aftermath of a conflict should be a focus developing capacity to absorb future investments. Capacity building should not be about replacing local capacity; instead local social capital should be the basis from which capacity can be further enhanced.

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