

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY:

Establishment and Functions of the Peacebuilding Commission*

Ambassador Sun Joun-yung

Vice-President & CEO, United Nations Association of Republic of Korea

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I. Introduction

The Peacebuilding Commission of the UN has been formally launched on June 23, 2006 as an inter-governmental advisory body aimed at *inter alia* bringing together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.

The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission has been hailed as a historic step forward in the reform process of the United Nations. It is indeed an important part of the evolutionary process of the UN, reflecting new challenges in the 21st century faced by all the member countries of the UN, and the responsibility of the universal organization that is charged with maintaining peace and security of the world.

The advent of the peacebuilding commission has provided many people with high expectations, and euphoria for facilitating and ensuring post-conflict recovery and

sustainable development in countries emerging from conflicts, thus contributing to the peace and security of the world.

The idea of creating a peacebuilding commission was first put forward in 2004 by the High-Level Panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General through its report “Threats, Challenges and Change,” assuming that the prevention of violent conflicts would be more effective than ending existing conflicts. In his report, “In Larger Freedom,” submitted to the General Assembly in 2005, Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed the Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body, which could consolidate resources to advise and propose strategies for post-conflict recovery.

Joint resolutions were passed in December 2005 by the General Assembly and the Security Council, following the time limit set by the World Summit.

The Commission will be inclusive of an Organizational Committee and country-specific committees. As a result of concessions and compromises among the member states, it was agreed that the Organizational Committee be made up of 31 member countries of the following categories: 7 from the Security Council (including 5 permanent members); 7 from the Economic and Social Council; 5 out of the top 10 financial contributors to the UN budgets, including voluntary contributions; 5 out of the top 10 providers of military personnel and civilian police to UN missions; and 7 additional members, to redress remaining geographical imbalances and include countries with post-conflict experience, to be elected by the General Assembly. Inaugural session of the standing Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission was held on

June 23, 2006, with the chair and two vice-chairs elected.

Country-specific meetings will be held with the participation, in addition to 31 members of the Committee, of representatives from: 1) The country under consideration; 2) countries in the region engaged in the post-conflict processes, relief efforts and political dialogue, and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations; 3) the major financial, troop and civilian police contributors; 4) the UN representatives; and 5) regional and international financial institutions as may be relevant.

It was also decided that representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other institutional donors should be invited to participate in all meetings of the Commission (as observers.)

The Organizational Committee shall establish the agenda of the Commission on the basis of request for advice from the Security Council, ECOSOC, General Assembly and the Secretary-General, and in exceptional circumstances from Member States on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflicts.

A peacebuilding support office has been established, within the Secretariat from within existing resources, for the purpose of assisting and supporting the Commission including gathering and analyzing relevant information.

A multi-year standing “Peacebuilding Fund” has been established in June this year with the objective of ensuring the immediate release of resources needed to launch

peacebuilding activities and the availability of appropriate financing for recovery. The initial funding target of the fund is set at 250 million dollars. Voluntary contributions to the fund will be accepted from member states of the UN, intergovernmental organizations, and other sources including private sector. Under the authority of the Secretary-General, the head of the Peacebuilding Support Office will provide overall direction and guidance on the program management of the fund and monitor its operations. The UNDP has been appointed to serve as the fund manager responsible for the administration of the fund, the receipt of donor contributions and the disbursement of funds. The overall management fees for both program implementation and fund management shall not exceed 11 percent of funds received. The Secretary-General will appoint an independent advisory group to provide advice and oversight on the speed and appropriateness of the fund allocations and to examine performance and financial reports. The advisory group will be composed of up to 10 eminent personalities, selected on the basis of their peacebuilding experience and in consideration of geographical and other balances. However, the Secretary-General does not enjoy full support from the membership of the UN for the *raison d'être* of the advisory group.

The Commission's consideration of a country-specific situation will be terminated, when foundations for sustainable peace and development are established, or upon the request of national authorities of the country under consideration.

All the activities relating to the functions of the Commission will be subject to review after 5 years of the Commission's creation to ensure the appropriateness thereof.

II. Assessment and Prospect

The Commission is an advisory body, not a decision-making body. The Commission aims at working closely with national and international authorities involved, placing importance on the national ownership of the peacebuilding process.

The weaknesses in international responses to post-conflict situations lie, among other things, in the shortage of funds and poor international coordination. Creation of the Commission is an attempt to overcome such weaknesses, and thus to contribute to building more secure and stable world.

Success of the work of the Commission remains to be seen. We have witnessed so many important decisions taken by the United Nations, on the occasions of 50th and 60th anniversaries of the Organization, the Millennium Summit of 2002, and thematic special sessions of the General Assembly, such as special session on AIDS, Women, and Financing for Development, to name a few. We need to reflect from time to time on where the UN is standing in terms of implementing those important decisions.

Composition of the 31 membership of the Organizational Committee was not agreed upon easily and without pain, because almost all of the 192 membership of the UN wanted to join it and had their respective reasons to claim a seat. The Committee with 31 members, selected on the basis of regional and other balances, is now in a position to act in all matters under a consensus rule.

Money is the name of the game in any UN exercises of this nature. The Peacebuilding Fund is to depend mainly on voluntary contributions from the member states and other sources. Cooperation from the Bretton Woods Institutions is not necessarily assured, because they have their own projects to deal with those countries emerging out of civil conflicts. The interactions that take place annually between the ECOSOC and the Bretton Woods Institutions have yet to produce meaningful and tangible outcome.

Proverbially speaking, there is always a risk that we start drawing the head of a dragon, but ends up with a snake's tail. The perception that the reforms of the United Nations are frequently synonymous with creating new positions, in most cases high-level positions, of the Organization, should be eliminated by actions and tangible results.

Provision of resources and improved coordination of the international actors are not enough to build a lasting peace and prosperity. Peacebuilding requires national ownership. The primary responsibilities of peacebuilding rest with the people and the political leadership of the country concerned.

The effectiveness and values of the Peacebuilding Commission's work should be evaluated above all from the country-specific settings. The success of the Commission would depend on how the resolution can be translated into action on the field. Frequently one should come back to the reality that the Commission's main role is to provide the Security Council and others with advice. Such advice will prove to be particularly useful and valuable, when there is a UN peacekeeping mission is on the ground. It is desirable that the work of the Commission should be focused on country-

specific situations, rather than engaging in discussions of general nature at the Headquarters level.

It is encouraging to note that the international financial institutions and other institutional donors have been included to the Commission. Their contributions will make a meaningful difference, if they come forward, as expected, to cooperate with the Commission to this end.

But to what extent such institutions as the World Bank and the IMF would financially cooperate with the Commission, remains to be seen. The two Bretton Woods Institutions are carrying out their own projects with regard to supporting recovery and reconstruction of the countries emerging from civil and other conflicts. For example, the World Bank approved an emergency credit of 50 million dollars to Liberia. The IMF is already involved in several post-conflict situations, including the two African countries placed on the Commission's agenda.

III. Conclusion

Brundi and Sierra Leone have become the first countries that were placed on the agenda of the Commission upon their requests. The Security Council had already communicated to the Organizational Committee its request for advice on the situation in those two countries. It is expected that some more countries will be placed on the Commission's agenda in the months to come. Those two initial countries will prove to be important exemplary cases through which the value of the Peacebuilding

Commission and its ability to make a real difference in the countries concerned can be judged.

The Commission, if it falls into division and disagreement between different groupings during the course of consensus building may run into donor-fatigue and inefficiency. The reform of the United Nations is an ongoing process. The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission is no doubt a big step forward in the reform process of the UN. It is important that the Commission should be given an opportunity to grow, through the support and cooperativeness of all the membership of the UN and other participating actors.

Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University

28-42 Samchung-dong, Chongro-ku, Seoul, 110-230, Korea

Tel: 82-2-3700-0700 Fax: 82-2-3700-0707

E-mail: ifes@kyungnam.ac.kr <http://ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr>