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**How the Peacebuilding Commission can live up to UN
Security Council Resolution 1325**

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Abstract

In 2005, UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolutions for the creation of a new Peacebuilding Commission. The new body will serve as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and will “marshal resources at the disposal of the international community to advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing attention on reconstruction, institution-

building, and sustainable development in countries emerging from conflict”. However, the Peacebuilding Commission is in its formative stages and provides an opportunity for gender concerns to be considered and integrated into the institution and its activities from the design stage. This paper provides suggestions for how the ideals and goals of UN Resolution 1325 can serve as a guide for engendering the Peacebuilding Commission.

Introduction

There is consensus internationally that the United Nations Organization needs to be reformed, especially in areas of response to crisis around the world. Thus, the submission by the UN Secretary General in two reports¹ that a Peacebuilding Commission be established was widely welcomed. Since this submission was made, member states and stakeholders have been interrogating what this commission will look like. While some questions have been answered, many more still exist.

In summary, the Peacebuilding Commission is supposed to address institutional gaps within the UN. The main shortcoming identified was the UN’s poor track record of ensuring that peace agreements mediated and signed are properly implemented and countries do not regress into violence.

Specifically, the Commission will:

- Propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- Help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and sustained financial investment over the medium- to longer-term;

- Extend the period of attention by the international community to post-conflict recovery;
- Develop best practices on issues that require extensive collaboration among political, military, humanitarian and development actors.

As the resolutions adopted by both the General Assembly and the Security Council “call upon the Commission to integrate a gender perspective into all of its work”², now that the Commission comes into full operation, several governments and civil society organizations have requested the Commission to live up to these promises.

These calls were echoed by the UN Secretary-General who urged member states in his report on women, peace and security, to integrate a gender perspective into the design and work of the commission³. The Commission in attempting to integrate a gender lens has to take stock of the UN’s past and ongoing attempts at mainstreaming gender into peacebuilding systems, practices and interventions and learn from successes, challenges and failures.

There have been several international instruments that have called for the inclusion and participation of women in peacebuilding, for example the Beijing Platform for Action paid attention to the role of women in armed

¹ Report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change¹ and the Report of the Secretary-General “In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all” (A/59/2005, 21 March 2005)

² A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645 (2005), paragraph 20.

³ *Women and peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, (S/2004/814, 13 October 2004)

conflict, by recognizing that men, women, boys, and girls experience peace, conflict, and the recovery phases differently.

However, it was not until October 2000 when the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & security⁴ that women's involvement in peacebuilding became a central issue on the international scene and a rallying advocacy platform for women's groups worldwide. The landmark resolution recognized the importance of including women in peace building, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The resolution provided an internationally recognized legal framework for addressing issues affecting women's peace and security at the local, regional and international levels. Broadly, the text makes commitments for gender parity at all levels of decision-making, including a gender perspective in the Secretary-General's reports and in Security Council missions. It makes provisions for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls, for the inclusion of gender perspectives in peacekeeping and post conflict reconstruction processes. It also calls on parties in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States, United Nations system, and civil society.

Five years after the implementation of the resolution, key results and successes have been recorded. The resolution has raised awareness of the importance of including women in peacebuilding, and of capacity building of women's groups in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. It has brought peace and security issues of particular importance to women to the attention of international actors and decision makers e.g. the Security Council. However there are also significant challenges facing effective implementation of Resolution 1325 on the "ground". These include the lack of gender

equality in peace processes⁵, under representation of women in decision-making, poor representation of women in peacekeeping operations; particularly in military and civilian police positions.

These lessons learned from implementing Resolution 1325 should serve as guidelines for attempting to integrate gender into the Peacebuilding Commission.

Why is Resolution 1325 important to the Peacebuilding Commission?

Since the main purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission is to learn from the UN's previous peacebuilding errors, Resolution 1325 can assist the institution in rectifying decades of marginalization and exclusion of women from decision-making structures on peace and security.

Essentially Resolution 1325 should serve as a monitoring tool for the Commission to gauge its performance on including women. Key aspects of the resolution will contribute to better efficiency and functionality of the Commission. This performance can be assessed on two levels: on an institutional level and a programme level.

1) Institutional

The Peacebuilding Commission will consist of two committees: the organizational committee (a) and the country specific committees (b). As part of the institutional framework, a Peacebuilding Support Office (c) will be established.

a) *The organizational committee* will be made up of 31 countries; seven each from the security council (including permanent members) and ECOSOC (particularly countries that have experienced post conflict recovery), five out of the 10 top contributors to the UN budgets, five out of top 10 providers of military personnel and civilian police to UN missions, and other seven members incorporating geographical imbalance

⁴ S/RES/1325 (2000)

⁵ *Women and peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, (S/2004/814, 13 October 2004), paragraph 29.

and post conflict experience (these will be elected by the General Assembly)⁶.

In this regard, paragraph one of Resolution 1325 - which calls for increased representation of women at all decision making levels in international institutions - should serve as a guide when selecting representatives from these countries. However, by closely abiding to this stipulation in the resolution, the Commission would have to accomplish a feat that has been difficult for the UN and the missions to the UN as a whole. Women are still widely under-represented in decision-making structures in the UN. At the same time, countries on the Organizational Committee will be represented by their relevant staff at the UN missions, and gender balance could only be achieved if more persons following the PBC issues were women.

b) Country-specific Committees⁷

Participation at country levels will be tailored to suit the given post conflict context. It is not clear if these country-level meetings will be held in the country emerging from conflict or in other locations such as New York. Representatives in these meetings will include relevant contributors such as regional organizations, regional banks and international institutions. While the resolution does not provide for a formal seat of civil society on these country-specific committees, they nonetheless present the best opportunities for civil society organizations and in particular women's groups to participate in the Commission's work. Towards this end, advisory mechanisms would have to be

developed for Country-specific Committee meetings to include civil society organizations and developmental actors working in those countries. They should particularly include representatives from vibrant women's groups and networks active in the country. For example if such committees had been present in the design of post conflict processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone, they would have ensured that Resolution 1325 was adhered to and that women formed a central part of peace processes in those countries. Furthermore, by involving women's groups and other CSOs in the activities of the committees, there is some assurance that the Committee will be in tune with the needs of local populations.

c) Peacebuilding Support Office

As part of its institutional framework, the Commission's work will be supported and coordinated within the UN Secretariat by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). There have been calls from different countries that the PBSO should have a gender adviser as part of its core staff. This is a good idea that should be implemented. Whereas the resolution adopted by the General Assembly's Fifth Committee on the PBSO did not provide for a gender adviser as part of the office's fifteen posts, it does call on the Secretary-General to ensure gender expertise in the PBSO. Towards this end, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has offered to second a gender and peacebuilding expert. The functions of this adviser should be similar to the gender adviser at the UN's Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) headquarters. This adviser should be linked closely to gender experts at the country level. DPKO's lessons of using Resolution 1325 in peace support operations should also be shared with the Commission. For instance, key lessons can be learned from the experience of the gender officer at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) about preparing women for elections in the transitional process and making the Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) processes more efficient.

⁶ The 31 members of the Organizational Committee of the Commission were finalized on May 16, 2006 and are as follows: Seven members of the Security Council: The five permanent members - China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States; and 2 non-permanent members: Tanzania and Denmark. 7 members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): *Africa*: Angola, Guinea Bissau, *Asia*: Sri Lanka, Indonesia, *Eastern Europe*: Poland, *Latin America/Caribbean*: Brazil *Western Europe/Other*: Belgium. 5 of the top 10 financial providers: Japan, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Norway 5 of the top 10 providers of military personnel and civilian police: Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Ghana. 7 additional members elected by the UN General Assembly: *Africa*: Burundi, Egypt, *Asia*: Fiji, *Eastern Europe*: Croatia *Latin America/Caribbean*: El Salvador, Jamaica, Chile

⁷ see: www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/questions.htm

2) Programmes

The Commission's main focus will be post conflict peacebuilding, involving assistance to countries in transition from war to peace. Traditionally, post-conflict peacebuilding has focused on the cosmetic face lifts of countries, often dealing with infrastructural reconstruction and governance. While these are critical, it is important that the PBC also prioritizes psychosocial reconstruction of communities. This is where women's psychosocial needs are usually located. In the past, UNIFEM and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have coordinated activities which address the needs of women and girls who have been the victims of rape and other forms of violence but if the Commission highlights these issues, it will de-compartmentalize gender issues and ensure that they form part of mainstream post conflict policies.

It is important to establish what "post conflict peacebuilding" means in relation to the timing of the Commission's intervention in a given country. One rationale for establishing the Commission is that it will focus on full implementation of signed peace agreements. In implementing these agreements, a key question remains: will the Commission address gaps and omissions in peace agreements? For example in situations where women were underrepresented at the peace table, and therefore not instrumental in drafting the ensuing peace agreements. Is the assumption that women would in fact have been involved in processes leading to the post conflict stage? This is an ambitious assumption considering by the fact that five years after the adoption Resolution 1325, women are still widely excluded and under-represented in peace and reconciliation processes.

Historically, funding for women's initiatives have been from the dregs of donor coffers. To remedy this shortcoming, Resolution 1325 calls for financing of women's peace initiatives on the ground. This presents an opportunity for the PBC, as one of its key advisory functions will be to recommend on the allocation of funds from

the standing Peacebuilding Fund⁸ to specific areas and needs in post conflict situations. The Commission's recommendations in this regard can serve as a barometer to gauge the priority given to women's initiatives in peacebuilding. Specifically the Commission should take into consideration the needs of women and girls in a particular context when designing and conceptualizing the Fund's priority areas.

Though Resolution 1325 calls for an end to impunity, and for the prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes including "sexual violence and other violence against women and girls", this has been particularly difficult to implement. Generally war crimes are difficult to prove, but violence against women has been particularly difficult to verify and prosecute for a variety of reasons, the most fundamental being that women are still hesitant to report cases. This is an area where the PBC's country committees can play a constructive role. Being close to the ground, they will be aware of cultural and other inhibiting factors that are preventing women from coming forward. Also by having gender analysis and considerations form part of the conceptualisation and selection processes of country committees, inroads for women's enhanced participation in transitional justice processes and for bringing attention to impunity for acts of violence against women and girls will be created.

The country committees also provide an opportunity for proper documentation of specific women's experiences and needs in post conflict peacebuilding. Women are not one homogenous group and as the nature of wars change, women and their roles in these wars also evolve. Thus, the Commission will be able to provide real time tracking of what women's issues are in various conflict zones.

An ongoing challenge facing the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Africa has been lack of awareness of the resolution. Many governments, even women's groups and gender machineries are not aware of the resolution, its importance to local peacebuilding or how to use

⁸see: UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (2005)

it in the course of their work. The potential role of the Peacebuilding Commission through its country-specific committees can be to raise awareness of the resolution among government structures and also call for capacity building programs that will inform women's groups on the importance of their involvement in formal peacebuilding processes.

The PBC also provides advocates for the implementation of Resolution 1325 another opportunity to make the UN abide by its commitments. With awareness of the resolution spreading, attention is being paid on whether the UN has learned any valuable lessons in five years.

Challenges

A major challenge facing the Peacebuilding Commission is its advisory status. How does the Commission ensure that the Security Council acts upon its advice? The argument is that since members of the Security Council will be part of the organizational committee, this should not be a problem. But what happens when the same domination, which exists in the Security Council, is mirrored in the Commission and hinders implementation of advice?

The Commission's focus on post conflict peacebuilding is a challenge to the implementation of Resolution 1325. The resolution is concerned with all aspects of peacebuilding; pre, during and post conflict. By focusing on the post conflict stage or what the literature refers to as "countries emerging from conflict", the Commission will not be addressing key areas where attention is critically needed and the UN and other institutions are failing. The unfolding crisis in Sudan and the international community's slow response is telling example of the bottlenecks that exist in responding to conflicts and the importance of prevention. If appropriate action is not being taken to prevent death and destruction, what will be the moral mandate for the Peacebuilding Commission in the post conflict stage?

The Commission also faces the challenge of which women's groups to involve in its consultations. Typically it is large women's groups with international visibility that are included in UN initiatives. The Commission will have to make efforts to diversify the involvement of women's groups.

It is assumed that the Peacebuilding Commission will work closely with DPKO, the new Human Rights Council and other UN agencies like UNIFEM. However, in the case of implementing Resolution 1325, this collaboration within the UN had not been properly coordinated. Though Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)⁹ was given the task of ensuring collaboration and coordination throughout the United Nations system, there are still lapses in ensuring implementation across the institution. Will the addition of another structure not worsen the coordination challenges?

Conclusion

The United Nations is at a crossroads in its evolution. As the institution goes through the reform process, it is important to continually remember that the outcomes of these processes will impact the lives of millions of men and women worldwide. Therefore, the creation of new structures should be viewed in this light. The Peacebuilding Commission is yet another opportunity for the UN to be more people-centred. It is encouraging that various actors are debating the issue of the Commission in the

⁹ IANWGE is a network of gender focal points in UN entities. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women chairs the Network. IANWGE monitors and oversees the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the programmatic, normative and operational work of the UN system. Members include Department for the Advancement of Women/Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DAW/DESA), Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), Department of Political Affairs (DPA), DPKO, Department of Public Information (DPI), Office for the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), UN Secretary-General's Special Representative For Children And Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAC), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNIFEM. Observers include the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (Hague Appeal for Peace, International Alert, International Women's Tribune Centre, Women's Caucus for Gender Justice, Women's Committee on Refugee Women and Children, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).

conceptualizing stage. But this debate needs to be broadened to a wider audience e.g. countries that have experienced wars and will be the beneficiaries of the Commission's activities. By doing so, it will be glaring that the issue of gender and women are inextricable linked to peacebuilding.

Finally, historically it has been women who have advocated the implementation of international instruments, whereas the political will has been low or sketchy. With clear examples of the contributions women have made to social harmonization throughout conflict cycles, ideally the inclusion of women should not require more advocacy. However, since the concept of the Peacebuilding Commission was introduced, it have been predominantly women's groups

vocalizing the importance of including women. The PBC can only be truly engendered when women's participation is not a women's issue but a human security issue central to achieving sustainable peace.

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