



209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA
563-264-1500
563-264-0864 fax
stanley@stanleyfoundation.org
www.stanleyfoundation.org
Richard H. Stanley, Chair
Vladimir P. Sambaiew, President

Policy Memo

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SUBJECT: Review and Vitalization of Peacebuilding

The Stanley Foundation convened about 30 governmental and nongovernmental officials near New York, May 21-23, 2010, to help facilitate the five-year review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Participants included the appointed review facilitator team leaders and representatives (Ireland, Mexico, and South Africa), UN officials, diplomats, and civil society experts from a number of countries.

Peacebuilding Progress

A broad assessment of PBC efforts thus far cited notable achievements. Strong support remains for both the importance of peacebuilding and its adoption as a core UN function. The PBC has also demonstrated success in its mandate to sustain international attention and broaden both engagement and financial support for agenda countries. However, challenges remain that are likely to persist without a conscious and concerted effort to mobilize the body's full potential in both current and future engagement with countries on its agenda. In spite of early contributions, the PBC has yet to establish itself as the "central UN pillar" for peacebuilding that was imagined in 2005.

More work is needed to maximize political leverage, facilitate strategic coordination across the UN system, and achieve attributable "value added" progress in the field. In order to maximize the PBC's full potential to promote effective post-conflict peacebuilding, the PBC and PBSO require enhanced support from the UN secretary-general and member states.

Many key issues were discussed during the conference. As indicated by the summary below, many inspired significant consensus, while others raised questions in need of further exploration.

Peacebuilding in the Field

Areas of Broad Consensus:

- Discussion reinforced that improvement on the ground remains the true litmus test in order to evaluate the PBC's effectiveness.
- Participants reaffirmed the need for a single, integrated peacebuilding strategy for each country emerging from conflict. They underscored the need for country ownership and for such strategies to be developed concurrently with conflict resolution and peacekeeping activity. Within national plans, the PBC should focus its attention on a

limited set of priority issues that address gaps or bottlenecks in the peacebuilding process, strengthen national capacity, and lessen the risk of relapse.

- Peacekeeping mandates that involve peacebuilding implementation should be developed through an effective interface between the Security Council and the PBC. Creative thinking and action on formal and informal Security Council/PBC engagement is needed.
- Significant agreement emerged on the need for the PBC to be more flexible, particularly in its ability to sort out and respond to a country's priority needs. This flexibility would likely manifest in various forms of engagement, differing both between countries and over time. Terms like *multi-tiered engagement* and *peacebuilding light* were used.

Remaining Questions:

- Adapting the Country-Specific Mechanisms (CSMs) for greatest impact on the ground: how should CSMs be structured to best respond to demands emerging from the field? What should be the role of the SRSG or other country representative and the country team, and how should they link to the CSM? Within CSMs, how much leadership should be shouldered by the chair, and how much should stem from active member engagement? Or should there be full country assumption of CSM responsibility, with the New York permanent representatives supported from the capital and the embassy?
- Progress benchmarks and exit strategies: how can peacebuilding progress be measured, both as a form of accountability and as a means for assessing when and how to phase out CSM engagement? Should there be a graduation process or exit strategy? Would country-specific annual progress reports provide a useful basis for evaluation and an incentive to maintain focus and demonstrate results?

Peacebuilding at Headquarters

Areas of Broad Consensus:

- The division of labor in peacebuilding between the New York headquarters and the field needs to be better defined, particularly in relation to the activities of the CSMs, which are currently considered overly New York centric. However, there was little agreement on how best to accomplish this division.
- The Organizational Committee (OC) was described as an institution very much seeking to define its own identity and function. One participant suggested its primary function should be to facilitate the work of the CSMs, establish an overarching link with IFIs and the UN system, and broaden normative support for peacebuilding through promotion of reports of the secretary-general and other analysis provided by PBSO. Others suggested that the OC should focus on best practices and lessons learned, perhaps selecting a few recurring issue areas for special attention, such as youth employment or drug trafficking.

Remaining Questions:

- PBSO and relationships within the Secretariat: The PBSO was originally envisioned to be a small and nimble support office. With its limited staff, it is overtaxed in its efforts to

function as a secretariat for the PBC, manage the PBF, and to maintain both intra-secretariat and interagency links in support of cross-cutting peacebuilding activities. Should its resources be reassessed to allow it to generate the authority, analytical capacity and technical expertise needed to effectively implement its complex mandate?

- Interaction between the Security Council and the PBC: better interaction between the Security Council and the PBC is needed. How can a bi-directional and mutually supportive relationship be achieved? What would it look like? How could this be more effectively enhanced in light of membership overlap between the two bodies?

Financial Resources

Area of Broad Consensus:

- This part of the discussion yielded more questions than consensus. However, there was strong agreement that the PBC should have a major role in encouraging and marshalling resources for peacebuilding from all sources, including the PBF, IFIs, ODA, and others.

Remaining Questions:

- PBC/PBF relations: with respect to the PBF, how could PBF funding best support and maximize the effectiveness of PBC engagement? Should all PBF recipients have some form of follow-up with the PBC?
- Partnerships with IFIs and other financial institutions: what input and assistance can the PBC provide to the decision processes of the IFIs to help marshal resources for country plan needs? How can the PBC help to enhance aid effectiveness and relieve the monitoring and coordination burden borne by recipient countries?
- PBC and private sector engagement: could the PBC, and particularly the CSMs, contribute toward galvanizing the engagement of the private sector on behalf of agenda countries, or would such engagement be outside the role and comparative advantage of the PBC as a political body? What should be the PBC's role in post conflict economic revitalization?

Expanding the Peacebuilding Commission Agenda

Areas of Broad Consensus:

- Previous consultations during the review process have revealed some appetite among post-conflict countries to come under the PBC framework. However, some participants noted continued reluctance among post-conflict countries to be added to the PBC's agenda.
- This hesitance was attributed to the need for a more convincing PBC demonstration of an obvious "value-added" from its engagement; an assumption by listed nations of increased obligations to the international community with uncertain benefits; a misperception that PBC countries would be removed from Security Council consideration; and a fear that the PBC label would underscore fragility and discourage private investment.

Remaining Question:

- Capacities for agenda expansion: adding new countries to the PBC agenda raised significant capacity concerns, both in relation to the PBSO's support function and in the leadership and focus required by CSMs. Can these internal resource concerns be addressed?

Other Remaining Questions

- Gender perspectives: has the mandate to integrate gender perspectives into PBC engagement and analysis genuinely impacted working methods and engagement with agenda countries? How can this be better explored and mobilized?
- Regional approaches: are CSMs and the OC sufficiently addressing the regional context of agenda countries? How can the CSMs partner more effectively with regional and subregional organizations in support of the peacebuilding process?
- The PBC and conflict prevention: what would be the merits of the PBC taking on a preventive role in pre-conflict peacebuilding? What would trigger such engagement and how would sovereignty concerns be addressed?

Much work remains to be done. The comprehensive review may well not be able to fully address all of the questions raised in this process, but the facilitators have signaled their commitment to deal with the central issues and complete their report in July 2010. General Assembly and Security Council action on the report will likely take place in the fall of 2010.

Full Report to Follow

A more comprehensive report about this conference and its major recommendations will follow in a few weeks.

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Memo do not necessarily reflect the view of the Stanley Foundation or any of the conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

For further information, please contact Keith Porter or Rachel Gerber at the Stanley Foundation, 563-264-1500.

About The Stanley Foundation

The Stanley Foundation seeks a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance. It brings fresh voices, original ideas, and lasting solutions to debates on global and regional problems. The foundation is a nonpartisan, private operating foundation, located in Muscatine, Iowa, that focuses on peace and security issues and advocates principled multilateralism. The foundation frequently collaborates with other organizations. It does not make grants. Online at www.stanleyfoundation.org.