

Peacebuilding Challenges for the UN Development System

Edited by Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss
with a foreword by Lakhdar Brahimi

Executive Summary

with Foreword and Introduction

Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Foreword <i>Lakhdar Brahimi</i> | 5 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| Annex 1: List of Participants | 14 |
| Annex 2: About the Contributors | 16 |

Executive Summary

The year 2015 marks the “use-by date” for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and will see the adoption of their replacement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ushering in what has been billed as a new era for global development. It is also the beginning of the final stage of Ban Ki-moon’s second term as secretary-general, when candidates hoping to succeed him will start to come forward. But most significantly, in 2015 the UN celebrates its 70th anniversary, while faced with unprecedented numbers of people affected by disaster and violence, and a growing gap between needs and resources. The UN’s 2015 humanitarian appeal identifies 75 million people in need; 80 percent of those it hopes to help are in countries mired in complex, drawn-out conflicts.

As the world wrestles with these devastating crises, the need has never been more urgent to examine the changing nature of conflict, and ask whether the tools currently available to the UN for resolving and preventing them are fit for purpose.

The moment was most timely for an off-the-record discussion on 19-20 March 2015 organized by the Future United Nations Development System (FUNDS) project, in cooperation with the UN Office in Geneva and with support from the Swiss government. Some 50 experts and practitioners (see Annex 1) gathered at the Palais des Nations in Geneva for an open exchange about the past, present, and future role of the UN system in conflict-prone states. The meeting was held under Chatham House rules and was aimed at encouraging the frank and uninhibited views of experienced practitioners and analysts.

The goal of the conference was to ask whether the UN is equipped for twenty-first-century peacebuilding, and whether or not this task is a comparative advantage of the entire system—security, human rights, humanitarian, *and* development. Can it reverse the trend of states relapsing into conflict? Faced with the reality of multiple, complex, unpredictable, violent conflicts—and their fragile, equally unpredictable aftermath—are the UN’s resources and the mandates given even up to the task? If not, what is the UN’s future in peacebuilding? And how can its prospects be improved?

In the face of these challenges, the meeting determined that the “door is open to change” at the UN because of three ongoing review processes directly relevant to the future of UN peacebuilding. These system-wide processes—the negotiation of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, and the Advisory Group on the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture—together aim to help transform the UN’s development, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding work and infrastructure, encouraging reform and a new strategic agenda for the next 15 years.

It is important that their recommendations do not end up “agreed by everyone but implemented by no one,” as has too often been the case in the past. It is clear that radical changes are needed if the UN and its development system is not to become even further marginalized. The following recommendations from the Geneva gathering are put forward in that spirit.

1. Re-examine the UN's field presence in conflict-prone states

The United Nations should, as an absolute priority, re-examine its field presence, including the nature and composition of a more unified country presence, leadership, the selection and training of suitable staff, provision of resources, and clear and unified delegation of authority from New York and Geneva.

The review should:

- Better prioritize elements of all mission mandates as well as the comparative advantages of individual organizations.
- Seek to understand the complexities of contemporary intrastate conflicts, including the ethnic, religious, political, and other bases of local disharmony.
- Focus on strategy as well as tactical implementation.
- In the near term, address local issues and finesse the UN's own structural problems.
- Include women from the beginning of planning for missions, not as an afterthought.
- Review the structure and purpose of special political missions (SPMs).
- Prioritize the UN's role at key transitional stages in peacebuilding—for example, in implementing peace agreements and negotiating constitutions and first elections, where its legitimizing power is most effective.
- Deploy development organizations of the system earlier in order to facilitate the transition from peacekeeping and the transfer of knowledge and contacts.
- Encourage more active engagement with important local and international non-state actors.

2. Prioritize research, knowledge, and learning

The operational United Nations should support staff through:

- Facilitating more in-depth understanding of the actual and potential causes of conflict, including in states where open conflict has not yet occurred or re-occurred.
- Undertaking analysis early enough to be useful—for instance, when planning missions and determining their mandates.
- Encouraging more effective engagement with local actors, and women's groups in particular.
- Developing more effective and unitary communications strategies.
- Supporting research on the political economies of conflict-prone states, especially rebel groups and other non-state actors, including sabbaticals by practitioners to unpack their experience.

3. Recruit staff with conflict experience

If the UN development system is to increasingly concentrate on conflict-prone states, the underlying theme of the meeting, there exists a requirement for more staff with familiarity with instability and the causes of armed conflicts, and with specific knowledge of the regions in which missions are deployed. The process of knowledge transfer to local UN staff should be more carefully conceptualized and institutionalized in order to maximize impact and eventual ownership.

4. Promote harmony in policy as well as operations

To be successful, the Delivering as One (DaO) initiative should foster more policy harmonization, rather than more unwieldy joint programming processes, to ensure that peacebuilding actions by different agencies and programs are dovetailing toward the same goals and can access the same contextual intelligence. Special efforts and modalities are required for UN operations in conflict-prone states because of the complex nature of unstable environments.

5. Integrate peacebuilding fundraising

There is a need to design fundraising strategies that focus on the most pressing needs, maximize the UN's comparative advantage, and encourage coordination between donors to increase efficiency. The UN and World Bank should revisit the notion of a common strategy in order to consolidate impact and leverage.

6. Reform the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Fund (PBF)

The PBC is far less effective than it should be. Its continued operation necessitates the clarification of its mandate and relationship in particular to the Security Council. It also needs to identify its comparative advantage among the many New York- and Geneva-based UN organizations. While the Security Council is focused on high-profile conflicts—such as Afghanistan and Iraq—the PBC could complement the weaknesses of the Security Council by focusing on lower-profile conflicts.

Reform of the Peacebuilding Commission should include:

- Working regionally with other intergovernmental organizations and civil society.
- Recruiting a pool of experienced advisors to facilitate relationships between domestic governments and the commission.
- Facilitating dialogue among parties, especially after elections.

Reform of the Peacebuilding Fund should include:

- Supporting more systematically non-UN actors in conflict-prone states.
- Allocating additional and more reliable resources for both emergencies and prolonged crises.

7. Make use of the 2016 election of the secretary-general to push reform

A rare occasion to elevate reform issues is the campaign for and election of the ninth secretary-general. Declared candidates for the position of UN secretary-general should be asked to spell-out explicitly and defend publicly their visions, expectations, and priorities for the UN's operational activities, including how to make better use of permanent and contractual members of the international civil service.

Foreword

The primary task of the United Nations as spelled out in the opening paragraph of the Charter is “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” To a significant degree, it is also the yardstick by which it is judged by the peoples it exists to serve.

Major global conflict has been averted, but the world has continued to be riven by conflict that the UN has often proved powerless to prevent. Because of such failures—which secretaries-general and members of the Secretariat if not always its member states have acknowledged—former secretary-general Kofi Annan established a panel on UN peace operations in 2000, for which I was privileged to serve as chair. The panel called for significant institutional change, increased financial support, and renewed commitment on the part of member states, if the United Nations was to be more capable of executing the critical peacekeeping and peacebuilding tasks assigned to it. Many of the recommendations, such as those on integrated peace missions, were initially met with some hostility. However, some were actively followed up, but many remained unimplemented.

In the last 15 years, the challenges have not gone away. Indeed, they are greater than ever as the causes of conflict along with weapons continue to multiply. Inter- and intrastate armed conflicts have become more complex. Some are overlain by religious ideologies and ethnic or tribal exclusiveness. International criminal networks are at work accentuating violence. Governments are facing increasingly hostile publics demanding regime change.

There are still too many conflicts that the UN has been powerless to stop, and too many where it has been present but unable to prevent the explosion of armed violence. Post-conflict situations also pose challenges in which the whole of the UN system needs to be involved, but where there is even a greater lack of cohesion and effectiveness. Where peacebuilding is not working, however, member states also have a lot to answer for. The most powerful are excluding the world organization from some of the world’s most critical flash-points. In others, they are attempting to influence and arm the belligerents, in others using their vetoes to impede effective action. All of these actions undermine the very basis of its legitimacy.

While the United Nations is still falling short, this year sees not one but two timely new reviews of its operations: the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group on the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture. They could not come soon enough. There is an urgent need for renewed introspection about the role of the UN in peacebuilding, and I was pleased to be able to attend the conference organized by the FUNDS Project and to write this foreword because these kinds of off-the-record conversations and publications can make an important contribution to answering at least some of the growing clamour for continued change. The FUNDS Project, with the support of the Swiss government, brought together an impressive group of people, many with considerable experience with the United Nations and its peace operations. One of them is the chair of the Advisory Group.

Some lessons of experience are already evident. The Peacebuilding Commission was established a decade ago but is generally agreed to not be working as it should; and its status, particularly in relation to the UN Security Council, should be reviewed as part of the revision of the peacebuilding architecture. The UN must continue to deploy integrated missions where it can. But their planning needs to be more strategic and measured. Some missions are large and sprawling, not cost-effective, and far from cohesive. There are still far too many separate parts of the UN seeking to exert their own influence and precluding system-wide effectiveness. Perhaps most importantly, fundamental disconnects exist between the military and civilian arms of the major operations.

There is an absence of continuity where the commitment to assisting conflict-prone states needs to be far more comprehensive and longer-term. The UN has many talented people but not enough of them are engaged in the UN's most important functions of enforcing and maintaining peace and security or in the essential challenges of turning the page on war and beginning the arduous journey of post-conflict reconstruction. While the choice of personnel is important, those who are deployed need to be given a greater understanding of the nature and causes of conflict. In phases of reconstruction, an intimate understanding of specific local circumstances is required, as well as the nature of internal and external forces preventing cohesion. It must seek to be as inclusive as possible, building alliances with local actors wherever feasible. The UN needs also to be wary of blueprints purportedly designed to instantly create modern states with the wave of a magic electoral wand.

Above all, courageous steps are needed within the UN both to strengthen its capacities and bring about a change in culture. Only then will the world organization be more effective in performing its most important function of countering conflict.

The conference raised many pertinent questions and provided some answers. My hope is that this excellent brief report and the accompanying essays will be widely circulated and read by those who have the capacity to influence the direction of change. There is no more urgent priority for the United Nations and the world today.

Lakhdar Brahimi

Paris, May 2015

Introduction

The Future United Nations Development System Project organized an intense set of conversations in Geneva on 19-20 March 2015 with a view to probing the problems and prospects of pulling together the UN system in conflict-prone states. The meeting was held under Chatham House rules in order to encourage an open debate, and quotations used throughout this introduction are anonymous but striking and pertinent.

The 50 experts gathered at the Palais des Nations were invited to consider: “What is the UN we want” as part of the theme for the SDGs of “the world we want” in these tumultuous times. Moreover, how can we achieve it? While many diverse opinions were voiced, at a time when the UN is perceived as scrambling for peace rather than building it, the meeting coalesced around the belief that action must be taken to challenge three basic assumptions that underlie the ambitions of the ongoing UN processes—the negotiation of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, and the Advisory Group on the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture—and UN reform generally:

- First, that such global review process and global accountability mechanisms create local-level peace and development;
- Second, that a unified, coherent international community will lead to better local results; and
- Third, that the existing international institutions largely have the appropriate tools and capacity to build lasting peace and sustainable development in conflict-prone states.

This introduction is based upon reactions to a set of specially commissioned essays by authors who, among other things, aim to reconsider these underlying assumptions and address the institutional flaws that underpin them. There are three general overviews. Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss report the findings of the FUNDS Global Experts Survey on the future of UN peacebuilding, including expert opinions on the impact of the Peacebuilding Commission and the DaO strategy. Thierry Tardy examines the structural barriers to military-civilian relations that the UN has struggled with since it began peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. And Charles Petrie and Adrian Morrice discuss the evolving face of peace operations, with particular focus on expanding mandates and special political missions. There follow three distinct case studies that provide specific illustrations of problems and prospects for UN efforts in conflict-prone countries. While it is true that all cases are distinct, nonetheless the specific realities on the ground in three in-depth country cases help to move the debate from generalities to specifics: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, by Tatiana Carayannis), Afghanistan (by Antonio Donini), and Burundi (by Susanna Campbell).

The most salient items of the debate are reported as partial responses to four questions: Who should build the peace? What is the role of the state? Why is the UN development system so ill-equipped for twenty-first-century peacebuilding? What are the Peacebuilding Commission’s shortcomings?

Who Should Build the Peace?

In an era of tight funds and alternative actors, a key question raised at the conference was whether the universal membership UN should remain a broad organization with a major role to play in emerging and middle-income states, or rather concentrate its operations and expertise on the poorest and most unstable regions? If the world organization opts for the broad approach, participants warned that it may be necessary to lower expectations of what the UN can deliver in peacebuilding. If, as many consider both inevitable and essential, it becomes more focused on conflict-prone states, the post-2015 UN development system will need to both wind down operations in more developed countries, and bring its peacebuilding toolkit, methods, and personnel up-to-date with the realities of twenty-first-century conflicts and threats.

It is also vital to recall that the UN is only one part of a larger jigsaw puzzle of peace, which includes governments, donors, other international organizations, and myriad local actors. The UN must therefore identify and maximize its own comparative advantage at different stages of conflict and phases of peacebuilding. It should feel more comfortable handing over certain responsibilities to other institutions in order to focus its resources and good offices where and when they are most effective. Each peacebuilding case requires a specific mix of organizations and expertise, but strategic choices are usually avoided. Within the UN, individual development organizations tend to invite themselves into situations, claiming mandates from their respective governing bodies, and mobilizing funds to pursue their priorities. This leads to a plethora of partners and inter-agency competition for attention and funds. The hydra-headed UN development system is often criticized for a lack of integration and continuity among its various moving parts.

The choice of organizations to be involved in UN peacebuilding is itself a challenge. As peace and war often co-exist, peace operations invariably move “downstream” into the realm of development, where the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have the most extensive field networks and play predominant roles. Yet peacebuilding frequently takes place in states still plagued by violence, thus necessitating a move “upstream” toward armed conflict. The lines are blurred and as one participant stressed, especially because the different phases are not sequential: in reality, peacebuilders must also be peacekeepers, and vice versa, making the need for well-defined mandates and strategies even more pressing.

The UN should feel empowered to make choices about when to enter into a conflict and when to say “no,” instead of invariably choosing the line of least resistance. Unfortunately, decision making in the UN is an exercise in papering over disagreements, which can lead to the system overpromising and overextending its capacity. One participant suggested that the UN should recruit a high-level official for each mission who is designated to act as a devil’s advocate—someone to always make the case for no intervention in order to force decision makers to consider the counterargument, or in the case of existing missions to stop and ask, “Why are we here?”

It is crucial for the UN to focus on *the* problem and not on *its* problems—that is, to tackle the actual situation on the ground and not worry endlessly about “UN plumbing and configurations.” Rather than attempting to reform the entire UN system, missions need to be better planned and based on stronger analysis from the outset. Some situations call for a small but

specialized footprint but others a larger and more significant presence. However, when conflicts are complex and drawn-out, with huge numbers of people displaced for many years, the organizations needed to build trust and the rule of law take a long time to take hold, and states need a commitment to a longer-term peacebuilding presence.

At numerous junctures, participants stressed that ultimately it is local people, governments, and institutions that must build and maintain peace. The UN's role is to help build trust, accommodate and reconcile differences, and encourage the conditions under which good governance and the rule of law can succeed. One participant insisted that the UN "has to respect local people, make them feel ownership; not do peacebuilding for them, but help them to find out what makes their peace sustainable." This approach takes time and local knowledge but can prevent the tragedy of recurring conflicts. The sensitivity of the work involved in peacebuilding is just one reason why the choice of UN personnel can be even more critical than the existence of a clear mandate and strategy.

Participants also emphasized integration—especially of technical and development cooperation within political missions. Success involves a recognition that all types of peacebuilding activities have political elements and cannot always be or even appear to be neutral. Some UN humanitarian organizations resist, and are even hostile toward, integration efforts because of the claim that they could constrain their actions. Others suggested that there are institutional advantages to maintaining separate offices in country: it may be politically advantageous for UN organizations alternatively to play "good cop/ bad cop." For example, one agency may point out human rights violations, while the other works to increase development cooperation. The UN must highlight human rights concerns, but there are opportunities to leverage political pressure to avoid conflict with national governments. Integrated missions may make it harder for different organizations to push parallel agendas in conflict-prone environments. Participants called for stronger integration of peacebuilding strategies and policy harmony among UN entities, pointing out that while full operational integration can be cumbersome and costly, there should at least be a common compass guiding the direction of UN peacebuilding.

As the system stands now, there are no "institutional incentives to share other agencies' objectives" in the opinion of more than one participant. It was also noted that even when different UN bodies and programs are working together well in the field, problems can stem from turf rivalry and competition in headquarters. As a result, the challenges of the so-called continuum from relief to development are still prevalent after several decades.

Other lingering questions are: how do we define "conflict-prone states"? While the term "peacebuilding" was originally coined with post-conflict situations in mind, it is possible—for example—for states to be conflict-prone because of turmoil in neighboring countries. So, when and where should peacebuilding begin? Can the UN concern itself with conflict-prone countries before ceasefire agreements are signed, or before fighting breaks out in the first place? And finally, the answer to "Who is responsible for building peace?" often assumes that the "who" refers to state actors and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). How can UN peacebuilding engage more successfully with both internal and external non-state actors and belligerents to build long-term peace.

What is the Role of the State?

The United Nations was said to “work most effectively when dealing with those most like it, e.g., donor governments and other international organizations, and least effectively when dealing with those least like it, e.g., militias and illicit networks.” The unique legitimacy that the UN enjoys comes from the universal membership of states, but this quality also blinds the organization to issues and factors that do not necessarily prioritize state interests. The UN Charter was principally concerned with interstate war, especially among the great powers, and not with intrastate conflict. Arguably, the best example of postwar peacebuilding was the (non-UN) Marshall Plan, but the nature of conflict has changed dramatically since World War II, and especially since the end of the Cold War. The UN is hard-wired for state-building, but sometimes it has to find ways to move beyond or finesse it.

The conflicts that the UN now faces are ever-more complex, involving intrastate violence, civil wars, and ethnic or religious strife. The primary actors are not state officials and armies but rather rebel groups, insurgents, guerrillas, warlords, independent militias, and terrorist groups. The traditional tools used by the UN to engage belligerents and manage armed conflict are no longer up to the task. While planning peace operations, the UN needs to be less state-centric, for example when collecting and analyzing intelligence. There is in particular a continued misreading of the political dynamics in Africa, with far too much emphasis on states and not enough on the local actors that are often the most influential players not only in conflicts but also service provision, trade, and communications. Sometimes, a situation that looks disorderly and chaotic to an outsider is actually governed by patterns and even order, just not necessarily organized by states.

The UN’s role in peacebuilding is based on its universal legitimacy, its universal norms and values, and its capacity to play an honest broker. This comparative advantage emerges because no other organization wields quite the same power as a legitimizing factor, and no other actor deploys the same range of expertise and services. In practice, however, the UN is mainly called on to come to the rescue in active armed conflicts that are judged to threaten international peace, whereas it is virtually absent from Latin America.

The rise of intrastate conflicts is a challenge to the Security Council’s evolving understandings of what threatens international peace and security. Internally displaced people and ethnic and religious violence are issues of pressing concern for communities around the world, but the UN is lagging behind when it comes to updating its mechanisms to properly address such threats to human security. There is a mismatch between UN mandates and actual appetite for risk. It must recognize that ever-expanding mandates do not make missions more effective; rather they reveal a lack of commitment and poor prioritization of goals. While early withdrawal is risky, there is also a danger of a long mission experiencing diminishing returns. Experts note that the role of the world organization is most crucial where there are “transitional political arrangements.” But the UN must take care not to squander key moments to build peace, for example when helping to draw up constitutions, build institutions, and oversee elections.

The UN’s legitimacy cannot always be taken for granted. It is no longer always welcomed with open arms as it was for much of the postwar era. Today the UN must earn respect by its actions and not by merely waving its blue flag. It is better able to play an effective role when states consent to its presence in country. One of the lessons from the UN in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo is that consent still matters and should never be taken for granted. The essence of successful peacebuilding is building and maintaining trust. At its best, the UN embodies the values of trust, impartiality, understanding of local contexts, and open communication with all parties. But when conflicts are still hot or when a ceasefire has yet to be reached, the UN sometimes becomes a direct participant in the armed conflict; and choosing who to speak to and who not to speak to is itself a highly political act; true impartiality is not always possible.

When the UN only negotiates with states, it automatically takes sides in the conflict and can leave key issues unresolved. The clear lesson here is that the UN needs to engage with and understand the motivations and networks behind non-state belligerents, without necessarily equating their legitimacy with that of the state. The FUNDS 2014 Global Expert Survey reveals that the UN is reasonably successful in maintaining contact with women and marginal groups, but it is less so in reaching out to non-state belligerents. This is difficult terrain for the intergovernmental United Nations, and such contacts are especially tricky where they are controversial for the main sponsors of a UN mission—for instance, Afghanistan is an obvious case. In many conflict-prone countries, the regional context is also of great consequence as non-state belligerents often operate across borders. UN representatives and envoys, as well as political analysts, in neighboring states could share intelligence more actively and devise common strategies.

In complex peacebuilding situations, the UN is faced with many challenges in keeping a dialogue open to all sides and is invariably associated with building the state. For the UN development system, peacebuilding is largely about strengthening local capacity, but the world organization should always be cautious that it is actually engaging in local capacity *building* and not local capacity *substitution*. One of the main ways that the UN generates this capacity and knowledge is through employing nationals in its missions; and so questions should be asked before recruiting expatriates.

Why is the UN Development System so Ill-Equipped for Twenty-First-Century Peacebuilding?

It is becoming clear that, when it comes to peacebuilding, UN development organizations will be called upon to assume major responsibilities. While peacekeeping and special political missions have expanded with robust mandates, they do not usually have the opportunity to nurture longstanding relationships with governments and communities. The development system thus is uniquely placed to leverage social and political capital, having developed local connections over decades of presence in a country. But the development system is not well-adapted to working in conflict-prone settings, or to responding to frequent changes in the dynamics between the UN and the host country. Can the UN's development organizations embark on peacebuilding even in circumstances where there is precious little peace to keep let alone build upon?

In countries not actually engulfed in, or on the brink of, armed conflict, the UN presence is represented by the country team, which is encouraged to work more closely as part of the Delivering as One initiative. However in the FUNDS survey as well as more generally, DaO was perceived negatively. The difficulties of working together operationally are exacerbated by a lack of harmony among UN administrations in organizational headquarters. The answer

may be to concentrate more on policy. As one participant explained, “it is not enough to *deliver as one* but we also need to *think as one*.” Policy harmony is as important as harmonizing operations, and more incentives are needed to encourage closer cooperation.

UN country teams do have many tools at their disposal—for example, in confidence building and risk reduction—but in more challenging conflict-prone circumstances, they do not have the same logistical resources as special UN missions and peacekeeping operations. This difference in capacity exacerbates the difficulties of transitioning from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. The UN needs to marshal different resources at different stages in peacebuilding processes, and deploy the right people, with the right skills, at the right time. These staff need to have expertise that is “contextually relevant” even if in reality the UN is often not configured for the environment in which it finds itself.

Participants identified a lack of high-quality political analysis, particularly in understanding the root causes of conflict, which the FUNDS survey had identified as the *sine qua non* of improving UN effectiveness. Analysis should be undertaken early enough to be useful—for instance, when planning the mission and determining its mandate. It should also be internally generated and not always outsourced to consultants. The case was also made for a strong political affairs unit to be incorporated into UN missions, and for its analyses to be integrated, cross-cutting, and shared widely. The silo-driven character of the UN does not help, especially because these political analyses by definition are subjective. Both field missions and headquarters thus are reluctant to examine the failures and learn from these challenges.

Peacebuilding is now experiencing a “local turn”: the UN is grappling with how it can make peacebuilding more inclusive of local actors and ensure local ownership that is required to secure lasting peace. The debate centers on the fact that local needs and knowledge must be balanced with regional and global interests when designing peace operations. Because regional and global actors often have representatives at the table, local interests and actors can get overlooked, particularly in high-profile cases. However, the UN system must take care not to romanticize the “local” since not all local players necessarily are legitimate. In addition, while it is desirable to include local staff where possible, sometimes peacebuilding operations require very specific skills and experience that may not be locally available. One participant also pointed out that “the local is never truly local” as many such actors are connected nationally, regionally, and internationally to larger interests and social movements.

What people in conflict-prone/post-conflict states seek most is a sense of justice; it is relatively easy to deliver a “peace dividend” in terms of building bridges and schools, but bringing a sense of justice is much tougher, and ultimately linked to trust. As one participant stated, “development is not about economics, it is about anthropology.” In addition, modern communication technologies are creating new challenges as hate speech and negative propaganda can spread with lightning speed, creating depths of mistrust and enmity that can be very difficult to redress—Ukraine was mentioned as the most recent illustration. It is also increasingly easy for disaffected local actors to tap into international illicit markets, which can reduce their incentive to engage in peacebuilding by diminishing profits. UN peacebuilding particularly in the post-2015 sustainable development environment, must deal with these emerging challenges and navigate ways to be more inclusive and participatory. Simultaneously, it also still has to prioritize its original mandate to reconcile differences, deliver development, and increase state capacity. As one participant commented: “the UN does not

have the resources or legitimacy to do long-term grassroots peacebuilding; it needs to build up an effective state to provide security and deliver social services.”

What are the Peacebuilding Commission’s Shortcomings?

The Peacebuilding Commission was established a decade ago and has struggled to establish itself as a relevant and impactful institution. There are examples of the commission working well. For example in Burundi, the PBC invoked the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to support national dialogue. Although peace did not prove to be sustainable, the blame cannot be laid on the PBC. It was also pointed out that the PBC can be instrumental in non-mission settings. In Guinea, there was concern about the effects of neighboring conflicts and with poor intelligence. By investing wisely, the PBC helped prevent conflict from breaking out, saving both lives and money. The PBC often works in smaller states, like Guinea and Liberia, which are otherwise neglected, and where the PBF can be used as an incentive to encourage states to “go the extra mile” in peacebuilding.

It was also proposed that the PBF could potentially be used to enhance its effectiveness with other actors. Instead of always being dispensed by the UNDP through UN organizations, it could be used for civil society organizations and even regional bodies as long as adequate accountability mechanisms are in place.

However, there were criticisms of the PBC on at least two counts: one practical, one statutory. The practical problem is that in some countries it is considered to have been ineffective and thus, for some, has irrevocably lost credibility. The FUNDS survey found that 38 percent of respondents believed the PBC to be ineffective or very ineffective and only 20 percent found it to be effective (almost half of the respondents were neutral). Statutorily, the PBC was designed to be separate from the Security Council. But because of this independence, the Security Council considers the PBC to be a threat: its members believe that the Security Council should have a monopoly on security concerns. This independence also means that the PBC only operates in countries that specifically request its support, and not necessarily where the UN is mandated to act. The PBC could complement the weaknesses of the Security Council by focusing on low-profile conflicts and working with regional actors. The PBC was never intended to be “another head of the UN peacebuilding hydra” but rather to complement what the UN is already doing by using its convening power to engage local and regional groups, civil society, and other parties. Most importantly, it was to encourage behavioral change essential for lasting peace. In this context, a chorus of participants urged that there was no need for new institutions: “Don’t create new layers. Focus on implementation. Fix what exists!”

List of Participants

Geneva, March 2015

| Name | Current Association |
|--------------------|---|
| Adekeye Adebajo | Centre for Conflict Resolution, Capetown |
| Andrea Aeby | Swiss Permanent Mission to UN, Geneva |
| Lakhdar Brahimi | United Nations (ret.) |
| Stephen Browne | FUNDS Project, Ralph Bunche Institute, CUNY Graduate Center |
| Neil Buhne | UNDP, Geneva |
| Susanna Campbell | The Graduate Institute, Geneva |
| Tatiana Carayannis | Social Science Research Council |
| Fantu Cheru | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute |
| Caty Clément | Geneva Centre for Security Policy |
| Fiona Curtin | FUNDS Project, Ralph Bunche Institute, CUNY Graduate Center |
| Alvaro De Soto | Institut d'études politiques, Paris |
| Antonio Donini | Tufts University |
| Alan Doss | Kofi Annan Foundation |
| Espen Barth Eide | World Economic Forum |
| Tom Farer | University of Denver |
| Alexander Fasel | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Rita Grünenfelder | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Sukehiro Hasegawa | United Nations (ret.) |
| Sonia Joly | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Vincent Kayijuka | UN, Burundi |
| Jürg Lauber | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Jannie Lilja | Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Rama Mani | University of Oxford |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Marta Mauras | Chile Permanent Mission to UN, Geneva |
| Dan Maxwell | Tufts University |
| Nick Micinski | FUNDS Project, Ralph Bunche Institute, CUNY Graduate Center |
| Michael Moeller | UN Office in Geneva |
| Adrian Morrice | UN, Myanmar |
| Charles Ndayiziga | CENAP (Center for Alert and Prevention of Conflict in Burundi) |
| Robert Piper | UNDP, Senegal |
| Matthew Preston | UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office |
| Fabienne Raber | Swiss Permanent Mission to UN, Geneva |
| Babu Rahman | UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office |
| Tore Rose | United Nations (ret.) |
| Gert Rosenthal | Advisory Group on the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture |
| WPS Sidhu | Brookings Institution |
| Hugo Slim | University of Oxford |
| Urs Schmid | Swiss Permanent Mission to UN, Geneva |
| Mirjana Spoljaric | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Carsten Staur | Danish Permanent Mission to UN, Geneva |
| Thierry Tardy | European Union Institute for Security Studies |
| Caroline Tissot | Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Sebastian von Einsiedel | United Nations University |
| Thomas G. Weiss | FUNDS Project, Ralph Bunche Institute, CUNY Graduate Center |
| Achim Wennmann | Peacebuilding Platform, Geneva |

About the Contributors

Lakhdar Brahimi is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria and senior United Nations diplomat, who most recently served as the United Nations and Arab League Special Envoy to Syria (2012-2014). He is also a member of the Elders, the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, and the Global Leadership Foundation. He is currently a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics and Political Science and a governing board member of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. His earlier United Nations experience included service as special representative for Afghanistan and Iraq after similar service in Haiti and South Africa. He was also chair of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, which produced the influential Brahimi report.

Stephen Browne is co-director of FUNDS and Senior Fellow of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York and former Deputy Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Geneva. He is the author of several books on development and the UN, including *United Nations Industrial Development Organization* (2012), *The United Nations Development Programme and System* (2011), and co-editor with Thomas G. Weiss of *Post-2015 UN Development: Making Change Happen?* (2014).

Thomas G. Weiss is Presidential Professor of Political Science and Director Emeritus of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at The City University of New York's Graduate Center; he also is Co-director of the FUNDS Project and of the Wartime History and the Future UN Project. Past President of the International Studies Association (2009-2010) and chair of the Academic Council on the UN System (2006-2009), his most recent single-authored books include *Governing the World? Addressing "Problems without Passports"* (2014); *Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?* (2013); *Humanitarian Business* (2013); *What's Wrong with the United Nations and How to Fix It* (2012); and *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action* (2012).

About FUNDS

The Future United Nations Development System (FUNDS) project supports and helps accelerate change in the UN Development System (UNDS), to strengthen its capacity to respond effectively to existing and emerging global developmental challenges in the post-2015 global development agenda.

The UN's development pillar is now its largest in terms of professional staff and resources. It encompasses some 30 development organizations, headquartered in 16 different cities, with about 50,000 staff and almost US\$20 billion in annual expenditures.

There is an urgent need for radical reform to address three related UNDS challenges: lack of coherence, undefined capacity, and increased competition both within and beyond the UN. Such reform would allow the UN to draw more effectively on its unparalleled collective wealth of experience, pool its expertise and resources, and boost its development impact.

Realizing that many frustrations have accompanied UN reform efforts in the past, FUNDS—which was launched in 2009—will be a multi-year process, designed to help build consensus around the necessary changes. The UNDS's role, functioning and performance, and the opportunities for and obstacles to reform, will all be thoroughly examined in the light of the rapidly changing global environment.

The UN We Want for The World We Want

www.FutureUN.org

