

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
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Statement by Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of Russian Federation to the United Nations

We are grateful to the Secretary-General and the Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, as well as to the Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their contributions to today's discussion.

In its meetings the Security Council regularly considers issues of post-conflict peacebuilding, both within the framework of a generalized review and in the context of individual countries. The peacebuilding activities of the Organization have taken on a global scale and demand our careful attention. It is symbolic that the initiator of today's discussion is a Council member with first-hand experience of crisis, having gone through a brutal armed conflict and being a recipient of peacebuilding assistance. In our view, such an insider perspective will help further optimize United Nations mechanisms and increase our common understanding of existing problems.

We believe there is a need to highlight a number of specific principles. First, and most important, is that the logic of any peacebuilding operation is a function of the principle of national responsibility for defining its priorities and the approaches to their implementation. Only national leaders can ensure sustainable peaceful development. Mentorship and templates must be avoided.

Secondly, the key component in successful post-conflict peacebuilding is the creation and strengthening of national institutional capacities. This should become — in facts, not just words — the system-wide priority for the entire Organization. Achieving lasting peace and stability is only possible when every aspect of responsibility and ownership lies with national players.

Thirdly, any assistance from the international community should be provided with the consent of national Governments and with respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The success of peacebuilding efforts in Africa, the Balkans, Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, the Middle East and other regions is rooted in the ability to take into account the interests and priorities of host States. Assistance from the international community should not be imposed from outside. There can be no predetermined recipes for assistance. The specifics of every State and the nature of every conflict must be taken into account. In some cases, robust international patronage is essential in order to help form viable State institutions capable of effectively resolving the people's most pressing problems: establishing security and stability, stimulating the economy and rebuilding social infrastructure. Such international trusteeship does not cancel out the principle of providing for the gradual transfer of responsibility for a country's situation to its national authorities and for an early definition and formation of a clear exit strategy. Artificially maintaining such patronage can squander its purpose and become counterproductive. It should not become a brake on the path to strengthening national Statehood.

The United Nations unquestionably plays a special role in coordinating international post-conflict and socio-economic reconstruction efforts. The Organization possesses unique legitimacy and has accumulated invaluable experience. Even today, however, this role presents many complexities and demands the coordinated efforts of the Secretariat, the Organization's programmes and funds, Member States, regional organizations and international financial institutions. In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's drive towards increasing the effectiveness of United Nations efforts in the area of post-conflict response, strengthening the Secretariat's organizational toolbox and ensuring the cohesiveness of its work. In the peacebuilding field, the United Nations and its missions rarely operate in isolation. Other international presences are often working alongside them, as in, for example, Afghanistan and Iraq. Relationships in such cases should be defined in strict compliance with Security Council decisions.

Many of the initial tasks of peacebuilding — such as in the area of security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration — now fall to United Nations peacekeeping operations. In accomplishing its chief task, namely, enabling the peace process to move forward, United Nations peacekeepers play a critically important role in creating the conditions conducive to peacebuilding assistance on a larger scale. Considering the growing complexity and multifaceted nature of peacebuilding mandates, it would be rational to entrust peacekeepers only with the initial reconstruction tasks. It is imperative that we exploit the potential of the Peacebuilding Commission and of regional organizations, international financial institutions and donors in subsequent stages of post-conflict peacebuilding.

We would like to express our gratitude to the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for preparing the draft presidential statement on the topic of today's meeting, which we are ready to support.