

Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building
21st January 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for bringing the critical issue of post-conflict institution-building to the Council today. We have much to learn from your experience, as well of that of East Timor. I welcome the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as, earlier in the day, the Secretary-General.

Helping build institutions is at the heart of building peace. Without security for the State and people, the economy and public services cannot operate. Without revenue, there will be nothing with which to pay for government services and functions and no confidence in the financial viability of the State. Without the rule of law, there will be no accountability. And there is a need to build the institutional capacity to resolve conflict peacefully.

The process of building institutions is not solely a technical exercise, but also a complex political one. It is often a core part of a peace agreement and is key in shaping the relationship between the State and society. It will also determine the level of confidence in the peace process and the extent to which public expectations are met. Achieving progress, particularly in the security and justice sectors, is a prerequisite for the sustainable withdrawal of peacekeepers.

But the process of building institutions is also a prerequisite for broader conflict prevention. Fragility and conflict are symptoms of institutional failure to manage stress, such as resource scarcity, climate change, corruption or organized crime.

The year ahead will again be a very challenging year for the United Nations in supporting institution- building. Challenges include supporting the needs of post-referendum Sudan, extending the protection of civilians and the rule of law in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and expanding protection and access to justice in Liberia outside of the capital — for which the Peacebuilding Commission will play a key role.

But blockages in peacebuilding are all too often due to failures or delays in institution-building. Those may be due to political reasons. But they are also due to continuing weaknesses in the ability of the United Nations to provide assistance.

There are five issues that I believe we need to focus on if we are to succeed this year.

First, time is critical. There needs to be the political and bureaucratic will to deliver on time and with sufficient scale to meet the volume of needs. That applies internally to the United Nations system but equally to Members States, such as through their engagement on the boards. Business as usual is not enough.

Secondly, United Nations support for justice and security sector reform needs to be much more effective. For that, there needs to be clear delineation of who has comparative advantage for which roles, so that we can invest in getting the predictable and accountable response required. That should reflect the right balance between immediate stabilization requirements and longer-term institution-building.

Thirdly, planning between peacekeeping missions and the funds and programmes needs to be genuinely integrated. When this Council mandates a mission, we need to be confident there is clarity on who within the United Nations will do what and that the funds and programmes have the means to ratchet up their engagement to meet these expectations. This has not been evident recently. We also want to avoid peacekeeping troops being pulled into institution- building activities, for which they are neither trained nor mandated.

Fourthly, there must be better quality and speed in civilian deployments. We look forward to the civilian capacity review, and we also look forward to the World Development Report, which will give further insight into how to improve our record in peacebuilding.

Finally, we need to give much greater focus to the perspectives and experiences of the countries themselves.

We need to be better at assessing and tapping into existing capacities and to ensure assistance builds — rather than surpasses — national capabilities.

We welcome the formation of the new grouping of 17 fragile and conflict-affected countries — the so-called Group of Seven Plus that is chaired by East Timor — to provide that voice and feed into the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. We would be wise to listen to their emerging findings during the course of the year. Fragile and conflict-affected States are perhaps the best judge of, and advocate for, the performance of the United Nations and the international community.