

From Post-conflict Peacebuilding to Sustaining Peace :

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Introduction

On April 27, 2016, the UN General Assembly and the Security Council simultaneously adopted a resolution on peacebuilding.¹ The resolution is considered groundbreaking as it expanded the concept of peacebuilding from post-conflict activities to a process also covering periods during and after the conflict with a focus on conflict prevention.² This expanded concept of peacebuilding is referred to as “sustaining peace,” and it is the obligation of the entire UN system including the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council to respond to its challenges, requiring a more integrated UN approach. This @PKO Now! examines the concept and challenges of “sustaining peace” through the analysis of documents including the 2015 report “Challenges of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture,” which informed the resolution.³

“Sustaining peace”

The Resolution defines the concept of “sustaining peace” as a “goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery,

reconstruction and development.”⁴ The preamble mentions the term “prevention” on eight separation occasions, showing the centrality of conflict prevention in sustaining peace. This is also the first UN resolution that clearly links peacebuilding and conflict prevention.⁵ This is in line with an increasing recognition recently for the need to prioritize conflict prevention in order to achieve durable peace as emphasized in two other reports published in 2015; “Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations”⁶ and “A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325.”⁷

In the past, peacebuilding has tended to be considered narrowly as project-based activities to address post-conflict priorities. However, in addition to post-conflict measures, efforts towards sustaining peace aim to address root causes that would prevent the outbreak of conflict in the first place.⁸ The effective implementation of efforts for sustaining peace will require 1) an approach that integrates the three UN pillars of peace, development and human rights, 2) inclusive national ownership, and 3) a realistic timeline with a focus on addressing root causes of conflict.⁹

Integration of peace, development and human rights

Efforts for sustaining peace, with conflict prevention at its center, cannot solely rely on peace and security operations but require an approach that promotes development and human rights. Economic and social grievances, human rights abuse, and culture of impunity are often some of the root causes of conflict.¹⁰ Development assistance promotes measures to address risk factors including social exclusion and inequality, while human rights activities monitor human rights abuses that are often initial signs of conflict.¹¹ Thus, unless a framework that integrates the three UN pillars of peace, development and human rights efforts is developed, the UN is unlikely to adequately respond to the challenges of sustaining peace. Consequences will likely include relapse into conflict, the continuous need to respond to repeated crises, and enormous human and financial costs.¹²

In the similar manner, structurally, the UN needs to develop a framework in which the common objectives of the entire organization are prioritized rather than different organizations pursuing their own interests without coordinating with each other. The UN

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in 2005 with the promotion of collaboration among the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Social and Economic Council as one of its main objectives.¹³ In order to invigorate PBC functions, this year's resolution emphasizes the roles of the PBC in building bridges among the main UN organs and promoting an integrated peacebuilding approach that recognizes the interrelated nature of peace, development and human rights. In addition, the Security Council reaffirms the need for cooperation with the PBC, and expresses intention to regularly seek advice from PBC regarding formulation, review and drawdown of UN peacekeeping and special political missions so that the long term perspectives required for sustaining peace are reflected. The resolution also calls for strengthening the capacity of the Peacebuilding Support Office established within the UN Secretariat in 2005 as well as partnerships between the UN and other international, regional, and sub-regional organizations such as the World Bank and the African Union.¹⁴

The resolution was drafted based on the 2015 report on the review of peacebuilding architecture, but the report, in turn, was prepared with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda¹⁵) in mind.¹⁶ Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal 16 on "peace, justice and strong institutions" seeks to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."¹⁷ Peace forms the foundation for SDGs and "there can be no sustainable development without peace." SDGs express a commitment of member states to respond to root causes of conflict including social, political and economic exclusion. There is great expectation for SDGs' roles to unite the three UN pillars of peace, development and human rights, to strengthen collaboration among main UN organs, and to promote sustainable development.¹⁸

Inclusive national ownership

While the assistance provided by the international community is critical, peace cannot be imposed from outside, and thus, requires national ownership. At the same time, peace consolidation becomes difficult in situations where the government and national elite lack trust of the people or people do not trust each other. Sustaining peace requires inclusive

national ownership in which responsibilities are shared and a wide range of actors participate including local groups, labor organizations, political parties, the private sector, and the civil society.¹⁹ In particular, participation of women, youth, and minorities should be ensured.²⁰ The role of the international community, including the UN, is not to lead peacebuilding efforts, but to support the local actors in performing respective roles in support of peace.²¹

Realistic timeline to address root causes

Sustaining peace, including development assistance, is a long-term and costly process. Change in attitude from confrontation to tolerance as well as building legitimate institutions trusted by the population take generations, and require at least 15 to 30 years for fastest performing countries. However, in many countries affected by conflict, peace processes, including negotiations for peace agreement, national consultations, and constitution making, are often carried out hurriedly without broad participation and do not adequately respond to causes that led to the outbreak of conflict. Additionally, post-conflict elections are important activities, but if conducted without trust and support of the population and inflame exclusive politics, can pose great risks for relapse into conflict. Hasty implementation based on unrealistic timeline is one of the common causes for breakdown of peacebuilding processes.²² A comprehensive and realistic approach is required for UN peace operations and peacebuilding assistance, focusing on conflict prevention and addressing root causes.²³

Case of “integrated peacebuilding” in Sierra Leone

The 2015 report on the review of peacebuilding architecture is based on case studies from five countries. According to the report, out of the five countries, successful cooperation between the PBC and the Security Council as well as among UN agencies on the ground towards sustaining peace was consistently observed only in Sierra Leone.²⁴ The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) was unique in that it utilized the leadership model of Executive Representative of the Secretary General (ERSG). In this model, the ERSG as the head of the mission, concurrently served as the head of UN

Country Team as the UN Resident Coordinator. The UN mission and the Country Team in Sierra Leone became a rare example that carried out peace and development activities under one leadership.²⁵

Progress in the integration of peace and development led to the formulation of a strategic paper for peacebuilding called Joint Vision for Sierra Leone 2009-2012. This is considered as the only case that united UN's political, security, development, human rights, rule of law and humanitarian activities in one strategic document in order to address peacebuilding challenges. Enhancing integration with the UN Country Team, the budget of UNIPSIL was 3 to 4 percent of the previous peacekeeping mission (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone), indicating far lower cost than peacekeeping operations. Additionally, the integrated peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone carried out activities based on the following principles:²⁶

- National ownership and inclusiveness: Working with local organizations to build local capacity, collaborating with political institutions such as the parliament, political parties and independent commissions, and supporting the civil society, traditional and religious organizations as well as the media
- Peace and development: Peacebuilding with a focus not on peace and security but on peace and development, concentrating on improving socioeconomic indicators in areas such as employment, education and health
- International partnerships: Strengthening coordination with multilateral and bilateral donors such as the World Bank, IMF and African Development Bank. The ERSG and the World Bank representative co-chaired donor coordination meetings.

With UNIPSIL completing its activities in 2014, assistance by the UN was handed over to the UN Country Team. While there are various remaining long-term challenges with regards to institution building and socioeconomic development, good progress made in Sierra Leone in integrating peace and development towards peacebuilding can provide important lessons to other countries.

Conclusion

The concept of “sustaining peace” expanded peacebuilding from an initiative considered as post-conflict activities to a process that covers the periods before, during and after the conflict. The integration of peace, development and human rights, inclusive national ownership, and addressing root causes of conflict are critical elements in realizing “sustaining peace” with its focus on conflict prevention. As sustaining peace and sustainable development are closely interrelated, the UN should ensure that sustainable development goal 16 on “peace, justice and strong institutions” is utilized to measure progress towards sustaining peace at the global and country levels.²⁷

End Notes

- ¹ UN Document, 2016a. "Security Council Resolution 2282," S/RES/2282(2016); UN Document 2016b. "General Assembly Resolution 70/262: Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture," A/RES/70/262.
- ² Security Council Report, "Peacebuilding: Council Briefing on PBC Annual Report and Informal Interactive Dialogue, What's in Blue," 21 June 2016, accessed on 22 June 2016, <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2016/06/peacebuilding-council-briefing-on-pbc-annual-report-and-informal-interactive-dialogue.php>.
- ³ UN Document, 2015a. "Challenges of sustaining peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture," (A/69/968-S/2015/490).
- ⁴ UN Document, 2016a, pp. 1-2.
- ⁵ Mahmoud, Youssef and Andrea O Suilleabhain, "With New Resolution, Sustaining Peace Sits at Heart of UN Architecture," 29 April 2016, accessed on 22 June 2016, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/04/sustaining-peace-peacebuilding-united-nations-sdg/>
- ⁶ UN Document, 2015b. "Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strength for peace: politics, partnership and people," (A/70/95-S/2015/446), pp. 48-57.
- ⁷ UN Document, 2015c. "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325," (2015), pp. 190-219.
- ⁸ UN Document, 2015a, pp. 9-10.
- ⁹ Ibid, pp. 3-4.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 16-17.
- ¹¹ UN Document, 2015d. Secretary-General's Remarks to Security Council Open Debate on "Security, Development and the Root Causes of Conflict," 17 November 2015, accessed on 22 June 2016, <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=9251>
- ¹² UN Document, 2015a, p. 22.
- ¹³ UN Document, 2015a, pp. 35-36.
- ¹⁴ UN Document, 2016a, pp. 4-6.
- ¹⁵ UN Document 2016e. "General Assembly Resolution 70/1: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," A/RES/70/1.
- ¹⁶ UN Document, 2015a, p. 8.

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- ¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme, accessed on 28 June 2016, <http://www.jp.undp.org/content/tokyo/ja/home/sdg/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-16.html>.
- ¹⁸ Mahmoud and O Suilleabhain, 2016.
- ¹⁹ UN Document, 2015a, pp. 17-18 ; UN Document, 2016a, p. 2.
- ²⁰ UN Document, 2016a, pp. 3&7.
- ²¹ UN Document, 2015a, p. 18.
- ²² Ibid, pp. 15-16.
- ²³ UN Document, 2016a, p. 2.
- ²⁴ UN Document, 2015a, pp. 23-25. Drafting of the report was based on case studies from five countries (Burundi, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Timor-Leste)
- ²⁵ In most integrated UN missions, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, not the head of the mission, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), concurrently serves as the UN Resident Coordinator.
- ²⁶ Browne, Stephen and Thomas G. Weiss, ed. 2014. Post-2015 UN Development: Making change happen. NY: Routledge, pp. 160-177.
- ²⁷ UN Document, 2015a, p. 53.