



Synthesis Report

GCSP Project on The UN Peacebuilding Commission and International Geneva

Background

On 20 December 2005, upon the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General and his High-level Panel, the Security Council and the General Assembly, “acting concurrently”, adopted resolutions 1645 and 60/180 establishing the new UN Peacebuilding Commission. The Commission will be responsible for addressing a critical gap within the UN and the global system by providing a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and facilitating dialogue amongst key actors.

Against this backdrop, the GCSP with the financial support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, launched, in early 2006, a project entitled “The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and International Geneva”. The main objective of this project has been to assess the implications of the new Peacebuilding Commission (PbC) for International Geneva. In particular, it sought to explore how the PbC can best assure that Geneva-based stakeholder can add value to the work of the PbC, in terms of country specific operations, norms and standards setting, lessons learned reviews and strategizing peacebuilding operations.

In a first step, the GCSP created a Core Group made up by representatives of international organisations based in Geneva (list attached). This Core Group met for the first time on the 31 January 2006 and then again on 1 September 2006. It established the TOR for several meetings to be held in Geneva and Zurich (International Security Forum). Up to the fall 2006, the following three meetings took place:

- A roundtable discussion with Geneva-based civil society organisations at the Quaker UN Office on the topic “Peacebuilding and the Roles of Civil Society: How does it look from Geneva?”.
- A public discussion at the GCSP on “The UN Peacebuilding Commission: Will it Make a Difference? How, to Whom, and When?”.
- A workshop organised by the PSIS of the Graduate Institute of International Studies (HEI) on the topic “Establishing the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: Towards a more comprehensive approach to post-conflict reconstruction”.

On 1 September 2006, the Core Group met for the second time at the GCSP to discuss the progress made on the PbC and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PbSO) since January 2006, to plan for a number of activities in the fall of 2006, and to look ahead at what concrete results were desired.

Basic facts about the PbC

- First meeting of the PbC: 23 June 2006
- Chair: Angola; Vice-chairs: Norway and El Salvador
- Members: 31
- Structure: Intergovernmental
- Authority: Advisory body – cannot take binding decisions
- Initial focus of PbC: Burundi and Sierra Leone

Functions of the PbC

According to the UN, the main function of the PbC is to marshal resources at the disposal of the international community to advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing attention on reconstruction, institution-building and sustainable development, in countries emerging from conflict.

In particular, the Commission will:

- Propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- Help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and sustained financial investment over the medium- to longer-term;
- Extend the period of attention by the international community to post-conflict recovery;
- Develop best practices on issues that require extensive collaboration among political, military, humanitarian and development actors.¹

Added value of the PbC

Expectations about what the PbC should do and how it will operate in post-conflict environments vary widely both within and outside the UN. Nevertheless, there seems to be relatively broad agreement that the 'added value' of the PbC will include the following:

- Development of 'integrated strategies' for peacebuilding, based on genuine partnerships with international and national actors;
- Promotion of project implementation by helping to mobilise a coalition of interests around a country in a post-conflict situation;
- Bridging the 'relief' to 'development' gap by providing overall coordination of all actors involved in peacebuilding activities;
- Ensuring long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, inter alia by maintaining diplomatic attention to countries in need of assistance;
- Improving the sequencing of the various phases of peacebuilding strategies.

Implications of the PbC for International Geneva

In Geneva, there is a strong presence of organisations—several UN agencies, other intergovernmental organisations and civil society organisations—dealing with development, Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes, the rule of law and transitional justice, human rights and other issues relevant for post-conflict situations. The discussions during the three

meetings revealed that there is generally a need to foster the awareness of this rich presence and to better explore the practical linkages between the various organisations. Also, the sequencing puzzle of whether, for example, security is a necessary prerequisite for the instatement of an electoral process, or whether the latter is indeed itself a factor in the establishment of a sustainable peace should be addressed. What is thus required is a rethinking of international stewardship as being not simply a matter of short-term intervention, but as involving successive missions that address the longer-term phases of consolidating peace and establishing lasting political and economic institutions and processes.

With regard to the PbC, many of the organisations that took part in the discussions suggested that they thus far had no official policy stance on the PbC at present, but were interested and currently developing their thinking on this. In general, agreement was reached in the discussions that there was a creative role for International Geneva to play in the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission, beyond merely 'plugging in' to the discourse in New York. Emphasis should be placed on Article 19 of Res. 60/180, which "Notes the importance of participation of regional and local actors, and stresses the importance of adopting flexible working methods, including use of videoconferencing, meetings outside of New York and other modalities, in order to provide for the active participation of those most relevant to the deliberations of the Commission". At the moment, the agenda of the Commission is still fairly open, and there is thus an opportunity to make constructive use of the wealth of knowledge found in Geneva and elsewhere.

In considering which Geneva-based organisations are relevant for the work of the PbC, the need to think broadly. The importance of the health sector has particularly been discussed (WHO, UNAIDS, Global Fund to Fight Aids etc.). Moreover, organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Bureau of Education (IBE) or the World Bank might be interested as well. In a more long-term perspective, it would also be desirable to establish a link with the planned Maison de la Paix, whose goal it is to build strong partnerships between research, UNOG, other international organisations and civil society.

Currently, the following organisations in Geneva have desk officers (or focal points) dealing with the PbC and/or liaison officers stationed in NY. This assures a bilateral information flow between the PbC and specific organisations in Geneva, but it has no lateral effect.

[table to be completed]

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Desk officer / focal point in GE</i>	<i>Liaison officer integrated into PSO</i>
UNOG	yes (2)	no
UNHCR	yes (1)	no
OCHA	yes (1)	no
UNDP		
OHCHR	yes (1)	?
ILO		
IOM		
UNICEF	yes (partly)	no
UNIDIR	no	no
ICRC	yes (1)	no

Involvement of Civil society

The UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions establishing the PbC made explicit mention of the contribution of civil society actors to peacebuilding: “*Recognizing* the important contribution of civil society and non-governmental organizations, including women’s organizations, to peacebuilding efforts” (penultimate declaratory paragraph); “*Encourages* the Commission to consult with civil society, nongovernmental organizations, including women’s organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate” (paragraph 21).

During the discussions held in the framework of this project, it was noted that human rights NGOs have had their attention focused on another dimension of UN reform, the creation of the Human Rights Council. While talk of a ‘comprehensive approach’ to peacebuilding activities is welcomed, there remains some uncertainty of how this will work in practice. It is hoped that there will be more continuity between the work of the conflict prevention initiatives and those of peacebuilding with the development of the PbC. The view was expressed that in reality the PbC will be better suited to providing political coordination, and will be mostly engaged in institution or ‘nation’-building rather than peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.

With regard to the roles of civil society organizations and NGOs vis-à-vis the activities of the PbC, different organizations will have different roles in responding to the PbC: some will be supportive, some will concentrate on advocacy, and some may be contesting. There is a particular value of Geneva-based organizations in this regard: the distance from NY will give space for all these activities to take place, with civil society organizations adopting multiple roles. Initially the work of the PbC will begin slowly, tackling only a few countries - the easiest cases - at the beginning. The first stage will involve analysis to determine which countries are ready for peacebuilding initiatives. It was suggested that the UN lacks capacity to do this alone so civil society organizations will have an important analytical role to play, as well as at future operational stages.

With regard to the involvement of civil society organisation in the activities of the PbC, the following recommendations emerged from the discussions:

- The PbC should allow designated organizations to observe country-specific meetings.
- Designated organizations should have the right to submit written statements relevant to the work of the Commission. The statements should be circulated to the Members of the Commission.
- Selected organizations with expertise in a relevant field or country should be invited to make an oral presentation and to engage in an interactive dialogue with the Commission during the country-specific meetings. At a minimum, two representatives of civil society organizations, including women’s organizations—with a preference to representatives from the subject country—should be invited to make brief presentations to the country-specific meetings.

Suggested Next Steps

The following next steps to further explore the relationship between the PbC and International Geneva were suggested during the three meetings of this project:

- An analytical mapping of what Geneva-based organisations could offer, including structures and informal processes that work well in Geneva.
- Development of a position paper on access and input of civil society organisations to the PbC. Civil society organisations should seek to influence the extent to which there is a real role for them in the functioning of the PbC, with special reference to structures and processes outlined in paragraphs 4 and 19 of the resolution.
- Development of a country paper to be given to the Chairman of the PbC and/or establishment of a working group focusing on the challenges the two countries thus far identified by the PbC—Burundi and Sierra Leone—are facing, and the advantages and capabilities that exist in Geneva which are relevant for these cases.
- Meeting of enlarged Core Group on 25 October to work out specific recommendations on how to enhance the coordination and interface of the PbC with Geneva-based organisations. These recommendations will be sent to the Peacebuilding Support Office and to all missions of the current member states of the PbC.
- In partnership with the United Nations Office at Geneva, consideration should be given to establishing an ongoing mechanism of dialogue and exchange on the issue of peacebuilding to continue harnessing the particular strengths of "International Geneva" and to enable the experience and expertise in Geneva to feed constructively into the international community's peacebuilding efforts.