

Concept Note
PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned
Meeting on Regional Approaches to Peacebuilding
8 June 2007

Introduction

Since its inception in December of 2006, the PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned has held two meetings. The first meeting, on 20 February 2007, focused on confidence-building measures and risk reduction associated with post-conflict elections, with special reference to Sierra Leone. The second meeting, on 17 April 2007, reviewed comparative lessons from various international compacts and cooperation frameworks with countries emerging from conflict. This third meeting of the Working Group on Lessons Learned will address an issue of direct interest to both Sierra Leone and Burundi which also has important policy implications for the PBC's work: regional dimensions of conflict and evolving regional approaches to peacebuilding

Objectives and Rationale for the Meeting

Although many contemporary conflicts are intra-state in nature, the role of regional and transnational factors in the outbreak, duration and resolution of intra-state conflicts is increasingly better understood. However, with some exceptions, the international peacebuilding policy tool kit still consists primarily of instruments targeted at the country level. Moreover, successful examples of regional approaches to peacebuilding are not widely known or adequately studied in order to extract relevant lessons about their unique contributions. Noteworthy examples include regional or sub-regional initiatives or mechanisms like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, ECOWAS, the UN's regional office in West Africa and the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities. Similarly, there are innovative initiatives at the intersection of peacebuilding and trade such as the Kimberley Process or the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative which seek to regulate the peaceful exploitation and trade of natural resources.

Policy initiatives and mechanisms at the regional level bring a unique dimension to post-conflict peacebuilding. Significantly, both Burundi and Sierra Leone have highlighted the importance of underpinning peacebuilding in their sub-region as part of their IPBS frameworks/compacts. Thus, a meeting focusing on regional approaches with direct relevance for peacebuilding in West Africa and the Great Lakes Region would add an important dimension to the PBC's work. Because of time constraints, the meeting would focus on selected regional experiences from Africa and Central America, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes and the CIREFCA process for the settlement of refugees and displaced persons in Central America.

Format and Structure

This open meeting will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. in the UN conference room 6. It will be in the form of a round table with a chair and several participants.

Chair:

H.E. Ms. Carmen Hernandez Gallardo, Ambassador of El Salvador to the United Nations

Panelists

On the Great Lakes Conference and other Africa-based initiatives

Ms Margaret Vogt, Officer in Charge, Africa I Division, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

Mr Yasser Sabra, Senior Political Affairs Officer, Africa I Division, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

On Central America

Mr Fidel Chavez Mena, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador

Ms Patricia Weiss Fagen, former UNHCR representative in El Salvador, currently Senior Associate at Georgetown University's International Center for the Study of International Migration, Washington D.C.

Output

A Chair's summary report of the meeting with relevant insights and lessons learned of direct relevance for the PBC.

Background Documents

A short discussion paper highlighting key issues prepared by PBSO