

Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned

Informal /Informal expert-level preparatory meeting on “The Transition of UN Missions” 6 May 2014

Main findings

I. Introduction

- On 6 May 2014, the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) of the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal expert-level meeting to discuss the transition of UN Missions. Following-up on the meeting of 3 April 2014, the objective of this specific meeting was to hear a briefing from briefers and to exchange views on the key challenges of the UN missions’ transitions.
- The meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. Jun Yamazaki, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan, and benefited from presentations by Ms. Leanne Smith, Chief of the Policy and Best Practices Service of DPET (Policy, Evaluation and Training Division) in DPKO, and Mr. Michael Lund, an expert from UNDP BCPR.

II. Summary of Presentations by Panelists

Ms. Smith presented 5 key principles of the “Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal” which was endorsed by the Secretary-General in February 2013, namely: a) Early planning, b) UN integration, c) National ownership, d) National capacity development, and e) Communication. She, then , presented the following three key challenges facing UN transitions:

- 1) Determining the right timing of the transition. The political nature of transitions, vague mandates and the large number of stakeholders involved make it difficult to make an informed judgment on when the UN missions are ready to downsize and withdraw. It is important to have regular assessments on the ground to measure progress against clearly articulated priorities (i.e. benchmarks) that host states and the international community have agreed upon, potentially as part of a compact. But this issue needs to be more thoughtfully elaborated.
- 2) Ensuring national ownership of the transition is another key challenge. Although host government ownership and leadership is critical for successful transitions, the capacity of the host state to engage in the planning of the transition and take on tasks previously carried out by peacekeeping missions, is often limited. Against this background and in order to adapt to changing circumstances and needs on the ground, the UN is moving towards gradual transitions.
- 3) Sustaining political and financial commitment from the international community to the host states. This is where the PBC and PBF play a critical role that needs to be

leveraged even more going forward. Yet it is also important to recognize that the drawdown and withdrawal of UN missions invariably result in less capacity on the ground and that UN Country Teams (UNCT) cannot compensate every function which UN missions provided at a one by one level. Thus, it is crucial for the UNCT and the international community to identify priority areas and to focus on of the broader goals and priorities of the post-transition period.

Mr. Lund noted that while “the policy on UN transition” is very useful, officials on the ground need to have more operational guidance; thus UNDP is now developing additional guidance on transitions for its country offices building on the system-wide policy.

One of the challenges for UNDP is that while there is huge expectation about the roles of UNDP and UNCT in general after UN missions leave, there are key gaps. For instance, he argued, UNDP does not have a clear political mandate, so that it may be difficult for UNDP or UNCT to perform the good offices role which some member states expect. In this context, he argues that the PBC can play very important political advisory role to the host states following UN missions’ transition.

He emphasized that although the UN missions’ withdrawal demonstrates the positive transition for the post-conflict states, it does not mean that peace-building efforts should cease. Nevertheless, for donors, UN missions transitions lead to decrease in the level of support provided for peacebuilding-related objectives. He thus mentioned that the PBC can play an important role in sustaining attention and support for the countries that undergo UN missions’ transition so that attention to those host states is sustained if not enhanced.

He also stressed that a compact or mutual agreement between the host states and the international community could be a very good idea in advance preparation for the transition as they help affirm the mutual commitment by the host states and the international community for peacebuilding-related goals.

III. Main findings

• On the basis of the presentation and interactions between the panelists and the Member States, the following represents the main findings from this meeting:

Advisory role to the Security Council:

- UN leadership might need an intergovernmental platform to reinforce its efforts during pre-draw down consultations with national (and possibly regional) stakeholders. The results of these consultations aim to help the Security Council's factor in its decisions on drawdown public perceptions, priorities and concerns linked to mission drawdown as well as the vision/need for the post transition UN presence.
- There is a need for a broad-based membership forum to consider the practicality for UNCTs to continue and increase supporting areas which UN missions were involved in prior to draw down. UNCTs have significantly different funding arrangements from those of UN missions and are dependent on donor preferences as

well as changing realities and priorities of the countries concerned. These changes may not exactly match the mission tasks, but still require calibrated response from the UNCT and the international community.

- The Security Council can use a political forum to help sustain political accompaniment of certain processes (e.g. constitutional review in the case of Sierra Leone) beyond the Council's periodic consideration of the situations concerned. Such accompaniment can also help sustain financial and technical support/engagement from the international community for ongoing and longer term peacebuilding programmes beyond UN mission transition processes.
- Transition of UN missions in a country is only a part of the overall transition that countries undergo when emerging from conflict. The Security Council would benefit from a broad-based membership platform where there is focus on the overall transition that countries are making from conflict to peace.

Creation of an enabling environment for transitions by:

- Drawing greater international attention to emerging opportunities and needs in the countries concerned as they transition to a more development-focused UN presence (position the countries concerned in a more positive light internationally to help attract investment and build greater confidence in its economy).
- Pointing to challenges and gaps (such as national capacity gaps) requiring greater national, regional and international commitments.
- Engaging development actors at the earliest stages of the UN transition process to facilitate greater alignment between development and peacebuilding-related priorities (compacts can be a useful framework).

Other points that participants discussed:

Possible larger roles for the Resident Coordinator in post UN-mission transitions. These roles should be based on the recognition that UNCTs tend to design and implement programs in institution-building in politically sensitive areas, such as support for constitutional review processes and capacity building of parliaments in host states.

- The imperative of establishing partnerships with regional organizations, sub-regional organizations, and neighboring countries in addressing the key challenges of transitions, such as border management issues. As a broad-based membership body that also brings together key regional actors, the PBC should be able to facilitate these partnerships.
