

DCAF-EPC-KBF Workshop on

**Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Towards an EU-UN Partnership?**

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**Keynote Address**

*By*

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**Introduction**

I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak on such an important topic at a time when both these issues – security sector reform and post conflict peacebuilding – are rightly receiving significant attention from policy makers and practitioners not just in Brussels and New York but in the field as well. All this is part of the endeavours to help states emerging from conflict in building a peaceful and stable future. The international community's efforts to engage in post-conflict peacebuilding has a long history while, on the other hand, security sector reform – in short: SSR – is a relatively new and emerging concept. But it too has an important heritage, grounded as it is in the key principles of good governance and the vital message that the security sector should not be ignored – on the contrary should be a central focus in applying the principles of accountability, transparency and the rule of law – if states and their citizens in states that suffer the consequences of armed conflict are to achieve a peaceful and secure future.

Both these areas reflect an enlarged understanding of security. The High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which reported at the end of 2004 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has stated “Today, more than ever before, threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all. The mutual vulnerability of weak and strong has never been clearer.” We are faced again and again with the incontrovertible fact that global security is collective, cooperative and multi-faceted. This complexity lies at the heart of the multi-level, multi-actor issues we are discussing today and points the way to the types of holistic solutions we should strive to reach.

I would therefore like to begin by making a number of observations, from my perspective, on these two interrelated themes of our workshop: SSR and peacebuilding. I will then address these issues from the perspective of the UN – where I have been intimately involved in previous assignments and have been greatly encouraged by the renewed emphasis demonstrated by the creation of a UN Peacebuilding Commission, which met for the first time just last Friday, within which SSR is acknowledged as a key activity. And finally, I will provide some thoughts on the imperative that it is at the heart of this workshop: to consider ways in which synergies might be further developed

between multilateral institutions. In particular, both the UN as a global actor and the EU as a regional one with a global reach have the potential to become significantly better integrated in their endeavours in these fields. It is a synergy that has been widely provided for in the UN Charter.

## **SSR in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding**

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its latest Yearbook has noted that in 2005, 17 major armed conflicts took place in 16 locations and, for the second year running all of them were intra-state conflicts. In the recent past, over 40 countries have been ravaged by conflicts displacing some 25 million people. In recent years, therefore, this changing character and scale of armed conflicts has drastically increased demands for interventions by the international community to assist in emergency relief and peace-building efforts, especially to protect civilians. In these internal conflicts, a high proportion of the victims are civilian, with a disturbingly large number being women and children. Not only are civilians the primary victims, but in these internal conflicts involving both regular and irregular forces, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants also becomes blurred. One of the results of this is a massive presence of small arms and light weapons in unaccounted for civilian possession. Another is the trafficking of human beings and goods – whether arms, conflict diamonds or drugs – across borders. These activities multiply the costs of war and represent a major challenge to human security. They also make conflicts profitable for some so that greed obscures the original grievances driving conflicts.

The foremost challenge for all conflict-affected countries is the re-establishment of a stable and secure peace. Peace is not simply the cessation of hostilities; it is the dynamic management of human, political, and economic development and change by non-violent means. A recent DCAF publication on *Security Governance in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* underlines the point that, alongside the political and socio-economic dimensions of peacebuilding, proper emphasis on the security dimensions of this task is essential as is due acknowledgement of the fact that the provision of security is as contingent on the principles of good governance such as transparency and accountability as the provision of any other public service. Security governance in post-conflict peacebuilding comprises a number of related activities such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), Rule of Law, transitional justice and, indeed, security sector reform as a means to improve security sector governance and implement human rights.

SSR has become a term associated with actors and activities that span the fields of development assistance, security policy and democracy promotion. SSR is driven by the understanding that an unreformed security sector represents a decisive obstacle to the promotion of sustainable development, democracy and peace. It is also an inherently normative concept which combines the needs for efficient and effective provision of state and human security with a central emphasis on the importance of democratic governance over such actors. Assistance that seeks to provide for more effective armed and security forces without a commensurate focus on democratic oversight and accountability does not constitute SSR.

In a narrow sense, SSR can reflect a state-centric understanding of security, focusing on those public sector mechanisms responsible for the provision of external and internal security, as well as on the relevant civilian bodies responsible for their oversight,

management and control. But SSR as part of post-conflict peacebuilding requires a far broader perspective. Beyond the level of the state, non-State armed groups and civil society actors have, in different ways, a key role to play and must be addressed by SSR. Armed non-state actors frequently serve as spoilers in the post-conflict period. And yet they may also act as security providers in the face of ineffective or oppressive state security forces. Negotiating the re-entry of such groups into civil society represents an important goal of SSR. A particular type of armed non-state actor that is becoming increasingly significant (and controversial) are private military and security companies. On the one hand, such companies may bring resources and expertise that are in critically short supply in post-conflict contexts. On the other, there is a danger that subcontracting security can short circuit longer term reform efforts or create artificial enclaves of security in deeply insecure environments. Ensuring the accountability and legitimacy of such actors is therefore critically important – especially in a transitional phase.

Post-conflict peacebuilding must therefore take into account both the ‘internationalisation’ and ‘privatisation’ of the use of force. There is an inherent tension that should not be ignored between the need to build up local capacities in states emerging from conflict and the reality that a great deal of the assistance for such activities comes from external actors. Others in this workshop will focus on the specifics of SSR policy and practice. I will limit myself to focusing on 3 principles that seem to me to be at the heart of effective SSR: first, local ownership; second, context is everything; and finally, cooperation and coordination.

**1. Local Ownership.** SSR strategies must tap into the immense potential resource represented by local communities. Internal conflicts often involve a breakdown of local norms and values within societies, especially in regards to the protection of children and other vulnerable groups. Restoring these norms and values, which can only be achieved with the active participation of local communities, is critical. We need to deepen our understanding of, engagement and meaningful interaction with local actors, since community ownership is a critical pre-requisite for the sustainability of reintegration strategies. President Dwight Eisenhower evidently worried a lot about the problem of democratic oversight and accountability, for it was a theme featured in his 1961 farewell address to the nation. Yet his speech was not just intended to frighten, but to inspire. He mentioned that the best resource for meeting this challenge was, in his words, "an alert and knowledgeable citizenry." It is more essential than ever for individuals and NGOs to take a more central role in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. They are essential because they serve as bridges – they link government with the people and they work to promote multilateral cooperation across national borders. They also provide a vital element in the effective and accountable governance of security institutions, and in the long term success of democratic reform efforts. Ideally, civil society institutions must play a central role in monitoring government policies and the activities of state security institutions, in presenting alternative assessments of security issues and in identifying alternate policy options. These are absolutely vital roles to play.

**2. Context is everything.** There is no generic SSR model. Each situation is different and dependant on very specific political, economic and security conditions need to be taken into account in shaping SSR strategies and programmes. Interventions that are initiated and funded by donor states or multilateral organisations need to resist the temptation to promote their own reform models which rarely fit neatly with the political and cultural circumstances of the reforming state. As I have already stressed, putting local actors at

the heart of such processes is the only way to ensure legitimacy and to give the means for domestic institutions to assume responsibility for their own security. Civil society expertise can be particularly important in the design and implementation of such strategies in order to provide well-informed local contextual knowledge. Cultural norms and patterns have to be respected and SSR built around a cultural context can be more sustainable such as by using traditional sources of authority. Village chieftains, the heads of local places of religious worship and teachers are some of the civil society figures who could help in SSR.

**3. Cooperation and Coordination.** Promoting effective and sustainable SSR is necessarily a long term endeavour, measured in years and even decades rather than weeks and months. External actors involved in SSR must therefore be prepared to stay for the long haul. In order to achieve meaningful results, SSR must not be addressed in isolation but should form part of holistic responses that link it to activities such as DDR as well as efforts in the field of rule of law which I highlighted earlier. It has to be recognized that SSR processes have attracted a wide array of external actors but rarely have these efforts coalesced into a coherent long term approach. In fact, international policy coherence with regard to the SSR agenda has been lacking due to overlapping mandates, strategies and priorities. This represents a significant challenge for all actors working in these related fields, in order to foster synergies, to better coordinate activities and improve cooperation at headquarters and in the field. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission will facilitate this.

## **The Role of the United Nations in this Context**

A central truth that emerges from the UN Secretary-General's important report of 21 March, 2005 entitled 'In Larger Freedom' is this – "...we will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. Unless all these causes are advanced, none will succeed." Understanding and addressing the interwoven picture forming the triangle of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights underpins the role of the UN in post-conflict peacebuilding.

As a norm-based institution, legitimacy is at the heart of the UN's mandate and activities. Given its global role, the organisation is uniquely placed to contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding and to actively promote an SSR agenda founded on principles of good governance. And while post-conflict peacebuilding is itself only one set of activities alongside other tools such as conflict prevention, resolution and peacekeeping, the array of stakeholders involved and the challenges they face are formidable. More effective peacebuilding that enhances rather than duplicating or replacing the role of national authorities requires more affective cooperation among and between UN bodies, international financial institutions, donors, troop contributing countries, regional, national and civil society actors.

The proposal to form a new UN Peacebuilding Commission was one of the most significant outcomes of the September 2005 World Summit. It offers an important opportunity to move forward in addressing the challenges I have been outlining. It should provide a framework for the myriad organisations and actors involved in this field to work together more effectively and to link post-conflict reconstruction with longer term development goals. It will also identify lessons learned and good practice gleaned

from experience to date. I look forward to hearing from colleagues more intimately involved in the evolution of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office about progress to date. I would, however, like to state here that I am particularly impressed by the quality of the work of civil society actors in contributing on the level of policy research in this field. They undertake research that simply is not performed in government – or, lamentably, even in academia, which remains more focused on theoretical approaches. Without singling out the efforts of any one group, I can say that this community is responsible for some of the best work on SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding more broadly. It is a resource pool that should be fully exploited in the development of the Peacebuilding Commission.

In recent years, SSR has become of greater interest and relevance in external assistance policies and programmes of the United Nations (though not necessarily under the label of “security sector reform”). Within the UN system, SSR gained most practical relevance in the context of externally-assisted post-conflict peacebuilding – a process which will most probably gain even more momentum with the operationalisation of the Peacebuilding Commission. In that spirit, on 12 July 2005, the President of the UN SC made a statement on behalf of the Council, in which the Security Council emphasised that SSR was an essential element of any stabilisation process in post-conflict environments and underlined that the SSR was inextricably linked with promotion of the rule of law, transitional justice, DDR and the protection of civilians, among others. It also acknowledged the need for better preparation, including mobilisation of necessary planning resources, and more coherent approaches by the United Nations and the international community in addressing these issues. Last but not least the Security Council highlighted the need for adequate attention to be accorded to SSR in the future, drawing on best practices that have been developed in this area. More recently, in its report on the 2006 substantive session, the General Assembly’s Special Committee on Peacekeeping requested that the UN Secretariat conduct “a process of joint policymaking on security sector reform best practices” similar to the efforts undertaken so far in the area of DDR. Finally, the UN Secretariat is currently involved in establishing a Peacebuilding Capacity Inventory which, in its first section, covers UN capacities in the area of security sector reform and governance.

All this demonstrates that SSR in post-conflict peacebuilding is very much on the agenda of the UN system. Unlike any other international actor, the UN would be in a position to assist states in improving governance of the security sector through SSR in a holistic way. However, there is no common understanding, and even less a comprehensive policy framework, that would guide UN SSR programmes and projects in a coherent, consistent and sustainable way. In that vein, I very much welcome the initiative of Slovakia to stimulate, under its forthcoming Presidency of the Security Council, a discussion within the UN which would pave the way for the development of a system-wide UN SSR policy framework. This objective is certainly a very ambitious one, particularly for the United Nations. Needless to say that the UN with 191 members is not as coherent an actor as the European Union with 25 nations from one continent. However, the fact that the European Union successfully developed an overarching, cross-pillar policy framework for security sector reform within just one year should encourage all those who believe that the UN should, and indeed could, develop its own policy framework that would inspire, guide and substantiate its already manifold SSR activities in post-conflict peacebuilding.

## **Towards an EU-UN Partnership?**

This brings me to my last point – to that part of the workshop title that has a question mark attached – “Towards an EU-UN Partnership?”.

The UN and the EU are, in different ways, uniquely placed to promote security sector governance through a holistic SSR agenda – applying a comprehensive approach to both security and development concerns as well as promoting activities aimed at both restructuring the security apparatus and improving its governance and democratic accountability.

Article 54 of the UN Charter emphasizes the importance of regional organisations for the maintenance of global peace and security. The High Level Panel recommended that much more be done in terms of cooperation between the UN and such regional actors. Given the regional dimensions of many current conflicts there is much to be learned from regional actors in addressing these challenges. With its expertise and resources the EU represents a particularly valuable partner. And with the development of an overarching SSR policy framework – to which the EU is to be particularly commended at this point in time – it offers an additional incentive for the UN to make it a prime partner in tackling the SSR challenge in post-conflict peacebuilding.

In this spirit, I very much hope, and encourage you all to contribute, that this workshop will come up with specific recommendations on how such a EU-UN partnership in post-conflict SSR could be strengthened. In other words – to prove that the question mark in the title of this workshop is superfluous.

Thank you.