

Speech: Lessons on building and sustaining peace

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN,
at the Security Council Briefing on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

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Thank you very much indeed Mr President. Thank you for travelling to be with the Security Council today. And may I join other speakers in also expressing my personal and the British government and Her Majesty the Queen's condolences on the death of President Bush who I had the honour to meet a number of times. He was indeed a great statesman.

And as you and Minister Faki did Mr President, I think it's also worth noting once more the passing this year of Kofi Annan, another great statesman who worked very closely with President Bush and both of them had at the heart of what they were trying to achieve everything that this debate is about today. So thank you very much for putting it on our agenda. And thank you to the other ministers for coming to join the Security Council.

I think it's very good Mr President that we've been able to have the benefit of Cote d'Ivoire's own experience. Too seldom in the Security Council do we hear of successes, so we wish your government well in everything it has achieved and long may it continue. And we salute all the reforms that you have brought in.

Another piece of good news that the Council was able to participate in recently concerned the lifting of sanctions on Eritrea and this success in Africa is very much welcome. I think a number of speakers have drawn attention Mr President to the fact that two thirds of armed conflicts that ended in the early 2000s relapsed within five years. So it's therefore vital that we remain focused not just on resolving conflicts but on sustaining peace in the long term.

And I'd like to focus in my remarks on three key lessons today:

Firstly, and as other speakers have noted, a political settlement needs to include the full spectrum of society – including women, including the Polish focus on human rights, including what the Dutch minister said about women and girls and education – and all of this is vital if peace is to be sustainable.

We need to be bold in this approach and we recognise that it can often be extremely difficult in the aftermath of a conflict to be magnanimous and to reach out to all sections of society. Nevertheless it is a very critical element. In the British experience from Northern Ireland, we believe that we were able to accommodate the interests of diametrically opposed armed groups in the political process that has brought two decades of peace.

It's important also that we engage with elites and that we encourage them to

give a lead rising above political, ethnic and religious divides and take tough choices for the benefit of all of their citizens. And I think it is all on our minds Mr President that the peace talks in Yemen are about to start and we look to all participants to approach these constructively and in a spirit of compromise.

Secondly post-conflict power structures and institutions need to be fully representative and they need to be legitimate. Fair power structures that broaden inclusion, accountability and transparency over time are more likely to reinforce a sustainable peace. That said there must be a political agreement, and I think we are all aware that in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan and result power struggles undermined ambitious state and institution building. Syria Mr President becomes even more important in this context. We will not be able to consider providing reconstruction assistance absent of a political settlement.

I think it's also worth pointing to the virtues of patience. The World Bank estimates that making meaningful improvements to institutions takes a minimum of 10 years. And I think the Peruvian intervention spelled out the vital importance of getting things like infrastructure right. So the conclusion from that is that long term, predictable and coordinated support from the international community as a whole is obviously going to be critical if peace is to last.

Bosnia represents a successful example in this particular context -The success of their transition to a peaceful state over 20 years after the Dayton Accords – this is in part due to the collaboration and support of this Council, the European Union and NATO and many others, including civil society and NGOs. In fact Paddy Ashdown who was the High Representative in Bosnia had three particular lessons for managing the end of a conflict. The first was do the rule of law first. His second rule was have a plan and stick to it. But his third rule was be prepared for it to take a long time. And I think we often approach things in haste Mr President. Obviously we don't condone backsliding; the key is to keep moving forward but we do need to have patience.

Thirdly we need to ensure that basic needs are provided for in the short term and support economic development in the long term. The provision of basic needs is vital to the alleviation of immediate post-conflict humanitarian needs but also to ensure political processes have the capacity to develop and thrive.

Development itself needs to be inclusive and create widespread benefits to ensure that groups are not inadvertently left behind. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda and Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programme rightly emphasizes the importance of employment-centred recovery and accessible opportunities for society to grow and for cohesion and this all helps to reinforce the Sustainable Development Goals.

If we wish to ensure that the 2 billion people who live in countries affected by conflict are not trapped in a cycle of violence then we must address instability head on. And it was very good to learn of the African Union's

Agenda 2063 which will clearly have a key role to play in this regard.

Mr President it isn't possible to touch on all ramifications of this important subject but thank you once again for sharing Cote d'Ivoire experience with the Council and starting a very thorough discussion of this issue.

Thank you Mr President.