



Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
New York

(Check against delivery)

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR GERT ROSENTHAL,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUATEMALA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE
OPEN DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE 5TH REPORT OF THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION
(New York, 12 June, 2012)

Madame President,

At the outset, allow me to state that we are pleased to see you presiding this session. We appreciate your personal presence; we appreciate the delegation of Colombia's having organized this open debate, and we appreciate the excellent concept paper prepared to guide our deliberations.

We also wish to express our thanks to the Secretary General for his statement, and to the Secretariat for the Report of the Peacebuilding Commission under symbol S/2012/70, which covers the proceedings of its fifth session. Guatemala was a member state of the Commission during this period and even had the honor to hold one of the Vice-Chairmanships. We therefore can relate to the contents of the Report, both in its informational and analytical aspects. We are especially appreciative of the detailed information on each of the countries belonging to specific configurations, along the categories considered the main functions of the Commission: political advocacy and support, resource mobilization and fostering coherence.

Madame President,

What gave origin to the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 was a very simple idea, conceptually speaking. The United Nations had accumulated 60 years of concrete experiences in the area of peacekeeping, and the same can be said in the area of development. The time had come, then, to capitalize on those experiences, crystallizing them in a specialized entity which would apply the lessons learned in both instances to countries emerging from conflict; in other words, in peacebuilding processes. A corollary to this idea is reflected in the institutional aspects, since three of the principal inter-governmental Organs – the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council – were involved in different aspects of peace making or peacebuilding. What better, then, than creating a specialized body, linked to those three organs, which would introduce greater coherence within the United Nations System in addressing the specific situation of countries emerging from conflict?

As will be recalled, the Commission was created through concurrent resolutions 60/180 of the General Assembly and 1645 (2005) of the Security Council, after relatively prolonged period of negotiations. Further, the possibility of introducing modifications to the forum was agreed to, by

establishing a five-year review (paragraph 27). Consequently, in 2010 three of our colleagues, including Ambassador Baso Sangquo, who is present, (in addition to the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Ireland), provided us with their Report, which tries to reflect the opposing views that are present in the United Nations regarding the performance of the Commission. The main conclusion of the three co-facilitators can be characterized in a single phrase: the hopes that accompanied the creation of the Commission “have yet to be realized.”¹ The Report contains recommendations that seek to close the gap between expectations and results, and the General Assembly and the Security Council aligned themselves with same in adopting resolutions 65/7 and 1947 (2010), respectively.

In a brief statement, it is neither possible nor appropriate to address the multiple issues raised both in the co-facilitator’s Report and in the Commission’s Report that is before us. It is for that reason that we are so grateful to the Colombian Presidency for their concept paper, which ends with three questions which help us to focalize our remaining remarks. These will be brief.

First, how can the Commission realize its potential to offer added value to the web of institutions dedicated to similar roles?

In our judgment, if the Commission would fully comply with its mandate, its added value would be self-evident, since, contrary to what the question implies, its role is unique. It does not need to compete with other fora to gain attention or space. The way to highlight its role is to improve its capacity to create partnerships, within and outside of the United Nations. Within the Organization, and due to the way that its membership is constituted, it can be said that the Commission is a product of the three principal intergovernmental organs already mentioned, and as such it can act as a hinge between them, strengthening the role of each.

Further, the Commission represents a meeting point between the Security Council, whose mandate is limited to maintaining international peace and security, and the General Assembly and especially the Economic and Social Council, which do have mandates in the area of development and democratic governance. Of course, the dividing line between peace-making and peace-building is hazy, but precisely for that reason a good understanding between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission would help the compliance with each organ’s mandates, especially in the field.

However, our perception is that, in practice, each forum carries out its activities as a separate compartment. In other words, the frequent invocations of coordinating efforts are more rhetorical than operational. This must stop, and give way to a true alliance. The same can be said regarding alliances outside of the United Nations, and especially with the international financial institutions. There, some progress has been achieved, especially with the World Bank and the African Development Bank, but we believe that there is still a long way to go.

Second, what tools should the Commission utilize to expand its potential in each of its three main functions in order to have a greater impact in the field?

¹ A/64/868-S/2010/393, page 3.

In our brief experience in the Commission, we perceive the greatest potential at the level of the country configurations, which have clearly had a positive impact on the ground, but which could be strengthened even more. The leadership of these configurations plays a critical role, so the selection of the President merits special care. These do not necessarily have to be limited to the pool of Permanent Representatives accredited to the United Nations; one could also think of notable personalities from outside of the Organization. The other instrument that clearly has had an important impact, with intrinsic value but also a catalytic element for the other root functions of the Commission is the Peacebuilding Fund. A call should be made to the donor community to replenish the Fund with fresh resources, since, in our opinion; it has been the most successful element of the United Nations' efforts in the area of peacebuilding.

Third, what can Member States contribute, individually and collectively, to empower the Commission and bring it closer to meeting its core objectives?

The Commission, like any intergovernmental organ, is the product of the responsible guidance and accompaniment of the member states, and the enlightened support of its Secretariat. Up to now, the demands to expand the number of country configurations has collided with the finite capacity of the Secretariat to handle a larger volume of activity. This is another way of saying that we must support the Secretariat, and continue supporting our active participation in this forum with the dedication and attention – I would even add sacrifice – which many countries have demonstrated in these five years.

Madame President,

The Peacebuilding Commission has so far become one of those cases which we frequently encounter in our midst, characterized by the half-full glass syndrome. We believe that the potential exists to fill the other half of the proverbial glass, in order to convert the Commission in what was originally anticipated when our Heads of State and Government adopted the 2005 Summit Outcome Document. Both the Report of the co-facilitators of 2010 and the latest Report of the Peacebuilding Commission suggest ways on how to attain this goal.

Thank you.