

## **OP-ED ARTICLE ON POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING**

**By Hon. Sam Kutesa and Lord Malloch Brown**

With a sevenfold increase in the number of peacekeepers worldwide, and the creation of new institutions such as the UN's Peacebuilding Commission, the past decade has seen a remarkable boom in international conflict prevention and reduction activity. We have seen some real benefits from East Timor to Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia. Today Uganda and the United Kingdom are involved in efforts to bring peace and stability in Somalia and Afghanistan respectively.

And yet conflict continues to curse too many countries seeking to make progress towards better healthcare, education and employment opportunities for their populations. It is no coincidence that one third of people living in extreme poverty, half of the children not in primary school and half of the children who die before their fifth birthday are living in countries affected by conflict.

First the food and fuel price hikes and then the global economic recession have only enhanced the fragility within these countries. In Kinshasa, where families have only recently begun to enjoy greater stability, they are now having to contend with increasing food shortages. Elsewhere in the DRC the mines have closed and left hundreds of thousands with no means of income.

We do not yet know whether countries recovering from conflict, or at risk of conflict, will endure the pressures of a global

economic crisis. Not to mention other pressures felt the world over including climate change and narco-trafficking.

But what is crystal clear is that more effective peacekeeping and peacebuilding is more essential than ever.

Significant strides have been made in improving peacekeeping and we now see more than 100,000 blue helmets or regional peacekeepers providing security while a peace agreement is implemented, supporting local police forces, or protecting the most vulnerable. The UK will chair a debate on how the UN can better focus these precious resources during its UN Security Council Presidency in August.

But peacekeepers cannot deliver lasting peace alone. Still too many countries reach a fragile peace agreement but fail to establish the political, social and economic institutions that prevent them lapsing back into conflict, sometimes taking their neighbours with them. It is only through concerted peacebuilding efforts that countries keep out of conflict in the long run.

The UN has attempted to improve peacebuilding in the past. The 2005 World Summit gave birth to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, which have begun to make a difference in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic - countries at risk of falling off the international agenda. But more broadly the peacebuilding record has been a mixed one and there is more to be done.

We attended a Security Council meeting on July 22, 2009 focusing on post-conflict peacebuilding under the Ugandan Presidency of the Council.

We discussed the Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding, which contains bold recommendations on how the international community can improve support to countries after emerging from conflict.

The Report's recommendations would allow the UN to engage in critical peacebuilding activities more rapidly. We know that in post-conflict environments there is a window of around 24 months immediately after a peace agreement, which is critical. There is a need for rapid implementation of the agreement to maintain the commitment of the parties. Swift action is needed to create a secure environment and a demonstrable improvement to the lives of local populations. Because only if people have confidence that things are changing will they be more prepared to invest in recovery.

It recommends that we develop stronger leadership to galvanise the UN around a single strategy. The right expertise is also needed to ensure that the strategy reflects the historic, political, social and economic factors that have led to the conflict. Each agency of the UN system needs to know which parts of that strategy they will lead on, and where they should work together with the World Bank. And early funding is absolutely crucial if we are to ensure rapid delivery.

Police and courts need to be re-established in a post-conflict situation so that everyone has access to accountable and affordable security and justice - protecting their rights and property, keeping their families safe, and resolving disputes. The economy needs to be revitalised, creating jobs that give an alternative to a return to fighting or crime.

In his Report, the Secretary-General focuses on the need to ensure that there are not just military but civilian experts on hand to work on rebuilding the institutions that allow security, social protection and economic growth to flourish.

Ultimately it is States themselves that need to take responsibility for peacebuilding within their borders. They cannot become dependent on an international mission that will one day pull out. But where there is a need for a helping hand, the UN, working together with regional and sub-regional organisations, is the only international institution with the necessary legitimacy and the range of political, security and development tools required.

We will support the Secretary-General to help him achieve his vision for a future in which international peacebuilding activity makes a real difference. We cannot afford to waste this opportunity. The human costs of failure are simply too great.

*Hon. Sam Kutesa is Uganda's Minister of Foreign Affairs.*

*Lord Malloch Brown is the United Kingdom's Minister for Africa, Asia, and the UN.*

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