Economic & Social Affairs

The Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflict:

The Silent Avant-Garde

United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on

African Countries Emerging from

Conflict: The Silent Avant-Garde

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NOTE

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Acknowledgements

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Glossary

ADB	African Development Bank
AHAG	Ad Hoc Advisory Group
AHWG	Ad Hoc Working Group
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
BWI	Bretton Woods Institutions
CPLP	Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries
DDRR	Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECHA	Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEMF	Economic Emergency Management Fund
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G-8	Group of Eight
G77	Group of 77
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDCT	Least Developed Country Tariff
Nepad	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONUB	United Nations Operations in Burundi
ONUC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Force
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOGBIS	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Foreword

The establishment and functioning of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African countries emerging from conflict could be considered as one of the key innovations in the work of the Council since its inception. The Council, through the creation of these adaptable and country-specific Ad Hoc Advisory Groups for Guinea-Bissau and Burundi, sought to put into practice the comprehensive approach to peacebuilding that had been advocated most notably by the Secretary General in his 1998 report on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa as well as by the Council itself in its Ministerial Declaration on Africa in 2001.

Working through existing mechanisms, the Council was able to bring its unique coordination role to bear on peacebuilding and economic and social reconstruction. In this endeavour, the Groups had strong support at the working level from the Department of Political Affairs in its capacity as the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peace-building, the UNDP and the country teams in Burundi and Guinea-Bissau as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Both the short-lived Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti of 1999 and the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict came on the agenda of the Council through recommendations from the Security Council and the General Assembly respectively. It therefore demonstrates that ECOSOC is seen as an important contributor in addressing the longer-term economic and social aspects of peacebuilding. While there were some limitations in its work, including the evolution of the political situation in the countries themselves and the limited ability of these groups to mobilize resources, the Council's strong advocacy for these two countries helped to keep them on the radar screen of the international community.

Among the achievements of the Groups, the enhanced working relationships between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council deserve specific mention. The two missions of the Group to Guinea-Bissau, jointly with the Security Council, testify to the high level of coherence reached by the two bodies in the consideration of the situation in this country. This experience should remain a reference for ongoing efforts to increase the coherence and impact of the work of United Nations bodies and entities.

The Groups could not have achieved these results without the dedication of all their members who have accepted to work differently compared to 'traditional' international support arrangements, and without the excellent support of the

Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The spirit in which the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups has been working should continue to inspire United Nations bodies. We hope that the Peacebuilding Commission will benefit from the experience of the Council's initial efforts in supporting countries emerging from conflict and the lessons learned distilled in this publication. We are proud to have been part of this "silent avant-garde".
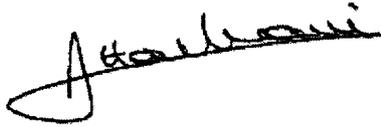
Ali Hachani
President, Economic and Social Council
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations

Preface

Beginning in the late 1990s, debate in the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council began to advance the concept of a comprehensive approach to peace-building and the need for coordinated support for countries emerging from conflict. With the decision taken by the Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, a major institutional breakthrough was accomplished in efforts of the United Nations to support countries emerging from conflict in order to ensure that they do not relapse into violence.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has served as a pioneer in these endeavors, through the work of its Ad-Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflicts. Although an experience limited in scale, as it concerns two countries, Guinea-Bissau and Burundi, the Groups set up by ECOSOC in 2002 and 2003 respectively, embodied for the first time, at the intergovernmental level, the joint consideration of humanitarian, economic and social challenges on the one hand and political and security issues on the other, giving shape to the comprehensive approach to peace and development that the United Nations had been calling for.

At the Secretariat level, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has served these two Groups and worked in a very constructive manner with the Chairman of the two groups, Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa and the delegations of Guinea-Bissau and Burundi. In so doing, the Department relied on the excellent support of other Departments of the Secretariat, such as the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the other Funds, Programmes and Agencies, strengthening the collaboration between the development side and the political side of the United Nations system. The uniformly close working relationship with the staff of both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is also a testament to the positive impact on coordination generated by this new mechanism.

Recognizing that peacebuilding is a long-term process which cannot succeed without long-term international assistance, the members of the two Groups have played an exemplary role in advocating for strong and targeted support to the two countries. Supported by the successive Presidents and Bureaux of the Council, the Groups have also been the first bridge between ECOSOC and the Security Council, an effort that still needs to be deepened and may find an opportunity to do so in the new Peacebuilding Commission.

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This paper, prepared by Dr. Jochen Prantl, Research Fellow in International Relations, Nuffield College, University of Oxford, aims at providing an expert perspective on the work of the Groups and to draw some conclusions that will be helpful to future efforts of the United Nations in the field of post-conflict recovery and peace-building.

José Antonio Ocampo
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Rien n'est possible sans les hommes, rien n'est durable sans les institutions.

Jean Monnet

Introduction

The question of how to respond effectively to conflict in Africa re-emerged on the international agenda at a time when the UN withdrawal from Somalia and the collective failure of 'the international community' to halt genocide in Rwanda had generated a crisis of confidence, fostering not only retrenchment but also reassessment of UN engagement on the African continent.

UN peacekeeping in Sub-Saharan Africa began in the early 1960s with a four year operation in the Republic of Congo.[1] The effects of that conflict and the vicissitudes of the Cold War prevented subsequent engagement in peacekeeping in the region until 1988 when the Security Council decided to verify the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. As the Cold War was winding up, the Council re-engaged in the management of regional conflict in Africa with successful missions in Namibia and Mozambique and with difficulties in Liberia, Angola, Somalia, and Rwanda. By the end of the 1990s, the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa were beset by a series of profoundly complex and seemingly intractable internal wars. Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Angola displayed a disturbing tendency to revert to open conflict after the initiation of Security-Council supported peace operations. In this context, and given the past propensity of some disputes to revert to active conflict after UN engagement, the question has arisen as to how to consolidate peace, and how to prevent the recurrence of conflict.[2]

Especially since 1997, the Security Council has been repeatedly discussing ways of enhancing efforts to promote peace and sustainable development in Africa. Meeting at the level of foreign ministers in September 1997, the Council members concluded "that the challenges in Africa demand a more comprehensive response."[3] The Council also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the sources of conflict in Africa, asking for concrete recommendations on ways to address and to prevent those conflicts. The report was also submitted to the General Assembly. Both the Council and the Assembly subsequently created mechanisms to follow-up and encourage the implementation of the Secretary General's recommendation.[4]

The proposal for an advisory group of the Economic and Social Council on African countries emerging from conflict emerged from the Open-ended Ad Hoc

Working Group of the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, and was endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 55/217 of 21 December 2000. That resolution included a request that the Council consider the creation of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict with a view to assessing humanitarian and economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support for implementation beginning with the integration of relief into development. In its high-level deliberations of July 2001 and the related ministerial declaration adopted on the role of the United Nations in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development, the Council emphasized the importance of efforts for integrating peace and development. Regarding the advisory group, the Council requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of member States and to submit for its consideration a report with proposals on its mandate, composition and modalities of work.[5] On 15 July 2002, the Economic and Social Council decided to create a framework for the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict.

This brief monograph provides an analysis of the role and performance of the ECOSOC ad hoc advisory groups (AHAG) for African countries emerging from conflict. AHAGs are set up at the request of the countries concerned seeking to facilitate the integration of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development into a comprehensive approach to peace and stability.[6] ECOSOC has established two advisory groups thus far, that is, on Guinea-Bissau (2002)[7] and on Burundi (2003).[8] The first part places the AHAGs into the wider context of the changing character of conflicts and the growing UN engagement in complex conflict settings. This is followed by a closer look at the rationale of the ad hoc mechanisms addressing the question of why and how the groups have emerged. The third section assesses the practice of the ad-hoc advisory groups, focusing on four aspects: firstly, the composition of the groups, their meeting structure, and institutional back-up; secondly, functions advisory groups accumulated over time; thirdly, linkages with other formal and informal institutions; and fourthly, shortcomings in the implementation of the advisory groups' mandate. The final section concludes with some lessons learned, which can be useful for the work of the recently established Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

1. Context

At the beginning of the 21st Century, most wars occur on an intra-state rather than an inter-state level. Conflict scenarios may include the collapse of state authority, with an absence of governance, accompanied by the breakdown of law and order. Civil wars involve a whole range of actors such as regular armies, militias or armed civilians. At the same time, there may be considerable regional spill-over effects, as internal violence often spreads to neighbouring countries. It may also affect regional economies, with economic growth rates shrinking and infectious disease such as Malaria and HIV/AIDS spreading. For example, following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, HIV incidents in the rural areas rose from 1% prewar to 11% in 1997. South-Sudan, heavily affected by civil strife, is another case in point: while the average countrywide HIV incidence among the adult population is 2.6%, in the South, the rate rose to 21% in 2004.[9] As these two examples illustrate, the consequences for civilian populations reach well beyond the period of actual warfare.[10]

Negotiated settlements of civil war tend to have a low half-life. Most disturbingly, the majority of countries will see a recurrence of violent conflict within five years after the conclusion of a peace agreement. Peace and development issues have become closely interconnected, since countries in economic decline, with a high dependency on primary commodity exports, a low per capita income, and unequal distribution of wealth stay prone to relapse into civil strife.[11] The resolution of conflict is therefore an extremely complex task that requires different kinds of international interventions such as peace enforcement with aid and reform. The flexible mix of policies and the proper sequencing of measures become key ingredients for the consolidation of peace. Negotiated settlements that end conflicts are usually not only military arrangements to cease armed violence; they also include a variety of other tasks. These address both military and civilian issues, such as the supervision of cease-fires, (regional) disarmament, demobilization of armed forces, integration of former combatants into civilian life, post-conflict recovery and development, humanitarian relief, establishment and training of police forces, reform of institutions, and the organization and supervision of elections. At the same time, addressing the development needs of middle-income and low-income countries may significantly lower the risk of civil war. While the risk of civil war in middle-income countries is four times as high as in OECD societies, this factor increases to fifteen for low-income countries.[12]

At the level of UN member states, the traumatic experience of UN engagement in Somalia and Rwanda fostered a deep reluctance to deal with crisis situations in

Africa. In order to overcome such reluctance and boost concerted international efforts to promote peace and security in the region, the UN Secretary-General encouraged the formation of ad hoc mechanisms (that is, groups of friends or contact groups) as a way of mobilizing international support for peace efforts.[13] This included catalyzing related efforts such as disarmament, demobilization of forces and reintegration of former combatants. Recent examples of those informal arrangements include the contact groups on Sierra Leone (1998) and Liberia (2002) or the groups of friends of Guinea-Bissau (1999) and the Great Lakes region (2003).[14] The formation of these groups helps to identify countries with a pre-existing level of commitment to become deeper engaged in conflict resolution. Coordinating and bundling activities vis-à-vis crisis settings and parties to a conflict constitutes another key function. This is of particular relevance in the area of peacebuilding where the number of actors tends to proliferate.

Yet, while those ad hoc arrangements can take on a variety of complementary functions, many of these groupings tend to be self-selected, with an exclusive participation and virtually no accountability. Consequently, self-selected ad hoc arrangements often face opposition on the UN membership side, facing the challenge of striking a balance between inclusiveness, efficiency, informality, transparency and accountability. This is particularly evident when analyzing the dynamics between informal groups of states and the Security Council.[15]

In contrast, ad hoc mechanisms like the advisory groups have the comparative advantage that they have an explicit mandate by ECOSOC, which specifies their rights and responsibilities and holds them accountable. This significantly enhances the degree of procedural legitimacy, while, at the same time, the advisory groups benefit from a high degree of informality and less bureaucratic structures. Besides advocating for informal mechanisms, the UN Secretary-General urged member states "to take a hard look at the existing 'architecture' of international institutions and to ask themselves whether it is adequate for the tasks we have before us."[16] This call reflected the understanding that managerial and ad hoc changes alone cannot display their full effect if they are not matched by adequate formal mechanisms of coordination at the intergovernmental level. Those considerations informed the recent decision by UN member states to establish a Peacebuilding Commission[17], which will be further discussed in the final section. As the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups have inspired the establishment of this new and promising body, while working often informally on two countries which lacked broad international support, they deserve the expression of the "silent avant-garde" that is the subtitle of this report.

2.   Rationale

The under-institutionalization of relationships between security and development agencies in the consolidation of peace fostered the establishment of ad hoc arrangements to bundle the disparate capacities of actors involved in this process. For some member states, upgrading the role of ECOSOC has been of particular concern, firstly, as a strategic forum to coordinate activities of the UN system with those of the IFIs, and secondly, to close the operational gaps in the transformation of conflicts. The enhanced cooperation of ECOSOC and the Security Council is considered to be very important by most member states in the implementation of multi-dimensional and long-term approaches to conflict prevention. Indeed, the Security Council, in its Presidential Statement on the situation in Africa of 24 September 1998, stressed the importance of greater interaction with ECOSOC in order to enhance the transformation of conflicts.[18] It was felt that closer coordination between the two bodies would facilitate greater attention to and generate sharper focus on the needs of countries emerging from conflict by mobilizing high-level political support. The Council also emphasized that economic rehabilitation and reconstruction constitute important elements in the long-term development of post-conflict countries and the consolidation of peace.[19]

Prior to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission on 22 December 2005, there was no formal institutional mechanism that allowed for sustained focus on the implementation of commitments by parties to peace settlement and to assess whether resources promised by the international community in support of peace settlements are actually delivered. Preventing the reversion into conflict requires the means to follow post-conflict developments closely and systematically. The experience of the 1990s, which saw the reversion to armed conflict in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and twice in Angola, strongly suggests the need for greater attention to the implementation of negotiated peace agreements and sustained improvement in the living conditions of the population. The multidimensional nature of conflict resolution has a number of implications that are worth singling out:

Whereas peace and security are profoundly linked to development, responsibilities for these are divided between the UN Security Council and ECOSOC. At the same time, it is the international financial institutions that have the greatest (financial) clout in multilateral development.

Ancillary to the last point, complex conflict settings require a somewhat softer approach in handling the sensitive issue of institutional prerogatives and

mandates. The achievement of crosscutting policy goals in interconnected areas such as conflict management and peacebuilding is problematic.

The transition between relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and long-term development is not necessarily a sequential process as they often proceed simultaneously.[20] The consolidation of peace requires therefore a comprehensive approach, guided by a peacebuilding strategy that reflects a common vision, a shared sense of responsibility, and commitment to partnership.

The proposal for an ECOSOC AHAG on countries emerging from conflict was built on ECOSOC's earlier establishment of a similar mechanism to assist in identifying the needs and in drafting a long-term programme of support for Haiti.[21] Since 1998, the Security Council has been spending an increasing amount of time on African conflict. Of a current total of fifteen UN peacekeeping operations, eight are on the African continent.[22] Hence, the demand for better performance in the way in which the United Nations deals with conflicts in Africa has been particularly strong. Very high on the list of demands ranks the "need … for greater coordination of priorities, programmes and related financial and technical support for broad-based recovery and reconstruction and to prevent the re-emergence of conflicts."[23]

Both Guinea-Bissau and Burundi were natural candidates for an AHAG. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, the potential for social unrest was very high following the civil war fought between the Government and a military faction for a period of 11 months between 1998 and 1999. The country had also been categorized as a Least Developed Country since 1981 and suffered from a high incidence of poverty. When the Group was established in 2002, Guinea-Bissau ranked 167 out of 173 countries on the UNDUP Human Development Index, 60 per cent of the country's working force was unemployed, and 88% of the population lived on less than US$1 per day. In 2005, it ranked 172 (out of 177).[24] The same year in Burundi, roughly 90% of the population lived on less than US$2 per day and more than half on less than US$1 per day. The country, which is also an LDC, ranked 171 (out of 175) on the Human Development Index in 2003, while in 2005 it ranked 169 (out of 177)[25].

Clearly, AHAGs emerged out of the circumstance that there was no effective institutional framework to steer the transition from peacemaking to peacebuilding. For example, in the case of Burundi, the International Crisis Group identified a large set of missing pieces on the donor, government, UN, and NGO sides in the coordination and strategic framework to address the conflict setting. [26] Shortcomings included the lack of a comprehensive transitional

strategy, the absence of joint planning, as well as poor linkages between existing donor reconstruction programmes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Institutional shortcomings in the transition from war to peace – the case of Burundi (as of February 2003):*

The donor community:
Lack of strategy;
No effective coordination meetings;
No coordination unit and secretariat;
No unified approach toward government, UN or NGOs;
Insufficient staff capacity.
The government:
Lack of comprehensive transitional strategy;
No effective coordination meetings or mechanisms;
Weak inter-ministerial unit;
Insufficient information on population's needs and existing programmes being implemented;
Insufficient staff capacity;
Insufficient financial resources.
The UN and NGO community:
No joint and comprehensive strategy: poor linkages between various strategies and plans;
No joint planning: sector-driven approach rather than focus on the transition process as a whole;
Insufficient linkages with the inter-ministerial unit;
Poor linkages with donor reconstruction programs.

* Information adapted from International Crisis Group, *A Framework for Responsible Aid to Burundi*, ICG Africa Report No. 57, 21 February 2003.

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