



Quaker United Nations Office

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Thank you to our hosts, and thank you to my distinguished fellow speakers for their insightful contributions. Those speaking before me have been intimately involved in the deliberations and negotiations that led to the report of the High Level Panel. In contrast, all I can offer is the perspective of someone who has sought to accompany the process from the outside, with a particular focus on ensuring that the new development framework addresses the complex needs and interests of people in situations of chronic violence and instability – a concern that I believe I share with those present here today.

Much of the ground has been covered by the previous speakers, so I intend to focus my comments on three topics: to review briefly what we have learned about the complex and holistic challenges posed by chronic violence and instability; to compare this to what has been set out for us in the report of the High Level Panel; and to consider next steps. For make no mistake: an agenda as clearly focused on poverty reduction as this one is, will succeed or fail on its ability to make progress in these environments where the first generation of Millennium Development Goals have largely failed, and where the poorest of us are increasingly to be found.

Chronic violence and instability: the need for a holistic approach

So, to review briefly what we have learned about the complex and holistic challenges posed by chronic violence and instability. First, we have come to far better appreciate the key role of violence

itself. Violence is part of everyday life for hundreds of millions of children, women and men on a daily basis. We have learned that *violence is a fundamental dimension of human suffering* in its own right, as integral a part of the human experience as hunger and sickness.

Second, we have learned from decades of experience working in these contexts, as well as from the countries themselves, (and this is the message of the New Deal), that in order to achieve development objectives we have to focus on *strengthening the fabric of society*. To over-simplify, development aid in these unstable and conflict-affected contexts is like pouring water into a bucket with holes in it. To be effective, we need to help fix the bucket, not just pour in more water and expect something different to happen. That is, to do effective development in the coming years, in these complex environments that are increasingly the home of the poorest of the poor, we need to partner with these societies to assist them to build their capacity, to increase the strength of their institutions, both formal and informal, to address their divisions, inequality and exclusion, and to strengthen their ability to negotiate differences, make decisions and address conflict non-violently.

Third, we have learned that *external factors are just as important as internal ones*, and in this category I would include everything from climate change and natural disasters, to transnational crime, to migration and arms flows, to the whole network of external economic and security policies, such as trade rules, drug policies, and indeed the security agendas of external actors. Developing societies deserve to be protected from the destabilizing impact of external stresses, which in many cases can completely overwhelm local resources and institutions.

We have also learned that the time scale for recovery in these situations is to be measured in generations, and that programs need to be not only locally owned and led, but owned and led in an inclusive fashion, involving not just the government and the elites in capital, but civil society and the hinterlands.

The report of the High Level Panel: a conceptual milestone

So, how does the report of the High Level Panel compare to what we have learned? Largely, it compares very well – indeed, from the perspective of addressing the needs of societies affected by chronic violence and instability, the report represents a significant step forward, and the Panel and its secretariat are to be congratulated. The centrality of violence is clearly stated, and the role of peace as a cross cutting issue, indeed as a development objective, is rightly brought out. The key role of internal factors such as governance, formal and informal institutions, political dialogue, justice, corruption and natural resource management are given due weight, as are external factors such as trade rules, transparency and transnational organized crime. We find included here many of the key messages from the 2011 World Development Report and from the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals, including some of the more controversial ones. The articulation of a universal agenda, with flexibility for individual countries to frame their own strategies and approach, is also welcome.

There are nevertheless a number of areas where the report could perhaps have put more emphasis. For example, some observers are particularly concerned that the issue of income equality was not given more space. The key role of civil society, particularly local civil society feels somewhat underplayed, (although we applaud the emphasis on providing an enabling environment for civil society organizations): in many of these cases, governments are likely to remain relatively weak, and so the role of a broader range of actors will continue to be important. And the discussions of the role of the private sector and private investment seem to be based largely on Western public corporate models: the role on the one hand of private and para-statal organizations, where there are particular issues with transparency and accountability, and on the other, of mutual approaches to local level risk management and investment, get little or no mention. The list of external factors that are mentioned also feels somewhat incomplete: for example, arms flows, which can be significantly

destabilizing, are given only brief mention. Similarly migration, which with environmental changes is going to be an increasing problem, feels underemphasized. And the question of the way in which the security priorities of more powerful countries can distort and negatively impact development priorities in countries already impacted by violence and instability is mentioned not at all.

It should also be noted that a number of issues that are particularly important in conflict-affected situations are not covered in the report: for example, the word ‘reconciliation’ does not appear once in the 81 pages of the report, even though there are formal reconciliation processes underway in many of these situations, including five out of the six Peacebuilding Commission Countries. This is perhaps understandable in a framework that is designed to be universally applicable, but it will need to be remembered that this agenda cannot be used as a comprehensive guide for work in conflict affected contexts.

Next steps

So, what’s next? On the agenda itself, it is going to be necessary to further develop and fine tune the targets and indicators, and also to make progress on establishing baseline data. It will be a constant challenge to ensure that goals and targets, as they develop over the next two years, continue to reflect the principles enshrined in the body of the panel report. We are also going to need to start to think more about implementation – and in particular, how to go from individual goals and targets to global, national and local holistic and multi-level plans for action. From a civil society perspective, there is also some concern that, now that the formal consultation phase has run its course, there will be less space for civil society voices to provide their input: as we transition to a conversation that is primarily between governments, we will need your support to make sure that civil society voices, particularly from the global south, still have a voice.

Others have commented on the political process, so I'd just like to highlight a couple of points. First, the issues around chronic violence and instability have been so far carried forward largely by the g7+ and by donors: to keep the focus on this agenda, it will be critical to broaden the base of support and to bring on board others, such as the BRICS and the G77, and this is going to take a concerted effort. Secondly, it will be very helpful to the process if donor countries signal early a serious intent to tackle some of the hard issues where the global North is perceived as having a particular responsibility – for example, as regards some of the external factors mentioned above, such as trade rules.

Conclusion

To conclude: the High Level Panel report marks a tremendous step forward, and many of the lessons that have been learned on how to do development in these situations of chronic violence and instability are reflected in it. But much work remains to be done both in filling in the details and in maintaining the political momentum to see this process through. Much of the success of the new development agenda rests on getting it right in these situations where the MDGs have so far failed, and where the poorest of the poor are increasingly to be found.

Thank you

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