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Quaker United Nations Office

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### **Long-term accompaniment of societies in transition: a role for the PBC?**

Minister Kamara, Chair Patriota, Moderator, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As has been made clear by our speakers today, our understanding of peacebuilding is evolving. And the institutions and processes of the UN have not yet adapted to this new understanding.

As our colleague from the World Bank has emphasized, societies take decades, even in the best cases, to recover from violent conflict. But the long time frame of post conflict reconstruction is not the only issue. Although our solution sets and the language we use tend to assume linearity, the underlying reality is that *the road to sustainable peace is not linear*. Transitions go both ways. Societies step forward and step back as the example of Timor Leste clearly demonstrates. External stresses change, internal stresses change, and societies often spend decades hovering on the edge of instability and conflict. And if we look at the bigger picture, the number of these societies seems likely to grow: as the impact of climate change becomes more keenly felt over the coming years, we can expect that an increasing number of countries will find themselves at the edge of instability, and for long periods of time.

Yet to address this, the international community has only relatively blunt and inflexible tools. At one level we have the UN Security Council, with its relatively limited toolkit including peacekeeping and

special political missions. At another, we have the country team structure, more poorly resourced and less coordinated. When the local UN configuration transitions from one to another, there is not only a change in resources, there is a change in focus, and particularly there is a drop in the level of political accompaniment and support for political dialogue. Although many strides have been made, it is still largely the case that UN institutions and processes, both at a member state and operational level, tend to be both linear in concept and discontinuous in application, while the reality we are coping with is continuous and complex and non linear.

What do we need? We need international institutions and processes that can track conflictual and fragile situations over the long term, and that can accompany societies consistently through states of greater and lesser stability. This will take stronger partnerships between the societies themselves (including both governments and civil society), neighboring states, regional organizations, donors, and the private sector, but in many if not most cases the UN will continue to have an important role.

Interestingly, this need for sustained and longer term engagement was part of the set of issues that UN member states were trying to address in the discussions that led to the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture in 2005. So as we approach the 2015 review, some questions emerge.

- is the PBC capable of and willing to address this gap, the long term accompaniment of societies that are balanced on the edge of conflict?
- how can the UN secretariat, agencies, funds and programs coordinate and organize themselves in country in such a way as to more flexibly assist these societies without discontinuity of attention and resources, particularly as regards political accompaniment and dialogue?

- And how can we better harmonize that work in the field with the needs and aspirations of the people of the country and the deliberations in member state bodies at the UN and in the region?

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