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**THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE:
BACKGROUND NOTE**

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Abstract

This short background paper provides a brief description and explanation of the so-called United Nations ‘Peacebuilding Architecture’ (PBA). It focuses on the creation of the architecture, the main mandates and core functions of its organs, as well as their interrelationships and connection with other UN bodies. This backgrounder sets the scene for the forthcoming GGI publications within the framework of the research project “The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: Successes, Failures, Lessons Learned”. Please visit GGI’s Peace and Security Section at www.globalgovernance.eu for further information.

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Introduction

The expression ‘peacebuilding architecture’ has been used in policy and academic circles to refer to three recently created organs within the structure of the United Nations (UN): the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).¹ These organs were created in 2005-2006 in the midst of proposals to restructure the works of the Organisation in matters related to international peace and security, especially reconstruction in post-armed conflict situations. Within the framework of GGI’s research project “The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: Successes, Failures, Lessons Learned”, this background note presents an overview of the creation of the peacebuilding architecture (PBA), the mandated tasks and main functions of its three organs, as well as their relationship with other UN bodies. The paper paves the way for forthcoming publications of the project and should be used as a succinct source of reference for policymakers and scholars alike.

The UN definition of peacebuilding

The term ‘peacebuilding’ effectively entered the UN lexicon in 1992, when the then Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, released a report

entitled *An agenda for peace*. The document sought to systematise the whole range of activities undertaken by the United Nations in international peace and security issues: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and “post-conflict peace-building” – as it was called at the time. In the report, the latter was defined as an “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict”.²

Following the release of *An Agenda for Peace*, the 1990s witnessed an increasing involvement of the UN in armed conflict through its peacekeeping operations, which gradually have come not only to interpose belligerent parties – *maintaining* or *keeping* a situation of peace – but also to carry out multifaceted actions closer to the ideal of *building* peace. Indeed, as the UN progressively started to present a more comprehensive and complex understanding of peace, academic and policy circles reflected certain conceptual confusion regarding terms such as ‘peace operations’, ‘first’, ‘second’ and ‘third’ generation peacekeeping, or ‘multidimensional’ and ‘multidisciplinary’ operations.³ Despite such confusion, the UN was, in fact, undertaking activities in the realm of what is currently defined as peacebuilding.

¹ The use of the expression is not uncontested, since it may imply that the UN only started to perform peacebuilding actions after the creation of those organs. As briefly discussed in the next section, however, the UN has been carrying out peacebuilding activities at least since the late 1980s under the leadership of organs such as the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The expression is herein adopted as shorthand for making reference to the PBC, PBF and PBSO together and does not entail any political connotation.

² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping*, A/47/277-S/24111 (New York: United Nations, 1992), para.21.

³ See, e.g., Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary conflict resolution*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 132-158; John Mackinlay and Jarat Chopra, “Second generation multinational operations”, *The Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1992); Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone and Robert C. Orr, eds., *Keeping the peace: multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Over the past two decades, several other definitions of peacebuilding were to be carved out by subsequent UN documents. They all converged, however, on the ideas of preventing relapse into conflict and creating a situation of sustainable peace.⁴ As of today, the definition of peacebuilding more commonly adopted is the one outlined in the so-called Capstone Doctrine, which defines peacebuilding as “a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace”.⁵ Still according to the document, peacebuilding “involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development”.⁶

UN peacebuilding, therefore, involves not only military and political actions, but also a wide range of activities in the areas of development and humanitarian assistance, and includes international, national and local actors. Recent activities undertaken by the UN in the area of peacebuilding include, among many others, technical assistance to national governments for identifying specific needs and implementing policies in post-conflict situations, support for the promotion of democracy and hu-

man rights, assistance for security sector reform, support for national reconciliation processes and for initiatives of poverty reduction.

The creation of the PBA and the functioning of its organs

As the UN engaged in an increasing number of conflict and post-conflict situations, its activities started to present severe shortcomings. Most fundamentally, the core difficulties in stabilising war-torn societies after armed conflict and the multifaceted strains on establishing structural and economic conditions for sustainable peace and development came to the fore. As a result, both the actions and the conceptual framework adopted by the UN, as well as its achievements, were heavily criticised.⁷ A research report published at the time, for instance, noted that approximately half of the countries emerging from armed conflict relapsed into violence within the first decade.⁸

⁴ See, for instance, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: position paper of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations*, A/50/60-S/1995/1 (New York: United Nations, 1995); Lakhdar Brahimi, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305-S/2000/809 (New York: United Nations, 2000); DPKO, *United Nations peacekeeping operations: principles and guidelines*, (New York: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008).

⁵ DPKO, *United Nations peacekeeping operations: principles and guidelines*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷ See, among many others, Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *The dilemmas of statebuilding: Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); José Manuel Pureza et al., “As novas operações de paz das Nações Unidas: os casos de Angola, Timor Leste e Moçambique”, in *Oficina do CES 290* (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2007); Oliver P. Richmond, *The transformation of peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Roland Paris, *At war's end: Building peace after civil conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Oliver Ramsbotham, “Reflections on UN post-settlement peacebuilding”, *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 1 (2000): 169-189; Eva Bertram, “Reinventing governments: The promise and perils of United Nations peacebuilding”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 3 (1995): 387-418.

⁸ Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the conflict trap: Civil war and development policy* (Washington: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003), 7-8. Then Secretary-General Kofi Annan would refer to five years in his figures, see Kofi Annan, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, A/59/2005 (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 2005), para.114.

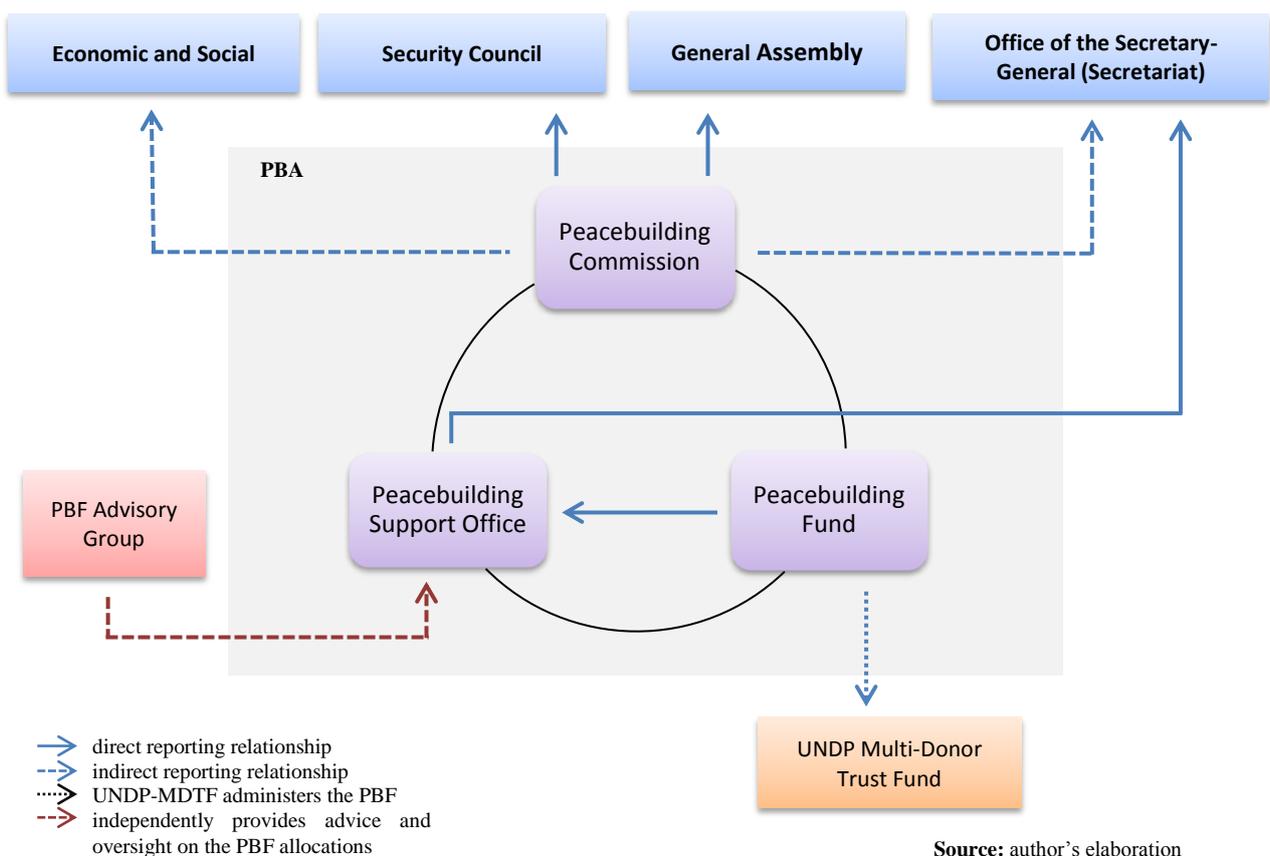
In 2004, against the accumulation of failures and criticisms towards UN peace operations, the members of the *High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* noted that the UN system lacked institutional structures aiming at preventing the collapse of states or at supporting countries in their transition from war to peace.⁹ Consequently, the Panel recommended the creation of a peacebuilding commission to centralise and coordinate the actions undertaken by the UN in those areas.¹⁰ Building on the momentum created around the process of UN reform in the first half of the 2000s, Kofi Annan endorsed the Panel’s recommendation and carried on a proposal to establish an intergov-

ernmental organ and an office to support all its activities in the realm of peacebuilding, as well as a fund to support countries experiencing post-conflict situations.¹¹ The three organs combined would later be commonly referred to as the UN peacebuilding architecture (see Figure 1 below).

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)

Annan’s proposal led to months of negotiations amongst member states and within the UN.¹² Thereafter, the world leaders assembled at the 2005 World Summit decided to establish the Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body to “to bring together all relevant actors to

Figure 1: The UN ‘Peacebuilding Architecture’



⁹ UN, *A more secure world: our shared responsibility. Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, A/59/565 (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 2004), para.261.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para.263.

¹¹ Annan, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, para.114.

¹² For an insider’s account, see Gilda Motta Santos Neves, *Comissão das Nações Unidas para Consolidação da Paz: Perspectiva brasileira* (Brasília: FUNAG, 2009).

marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery”.¹³ In accordance with the Summit’s Outcome Document, the Commission was established later in that same year by Security Council Resolution S/RES/1645 and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/180. According to its founding Resolutions, the Commission operates as a subsidiary organ of both the UNSC and the UNGA¹⁴ – the so-called ‘parental bodies’ – and its main purposes are:

- *To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;*
- *To focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development;*
- *To provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.*¹⁵

During most of its first year of functioning, the PBC devoted itself particularly to discussing administrative and procedural issues, including its working formats. The Commission currently

operates in three configurations: **(a) the Organisational Committee (OC)**, which sets the agenda of the PBC and is often mistakenly assumed as the Commission itself; **(b) Country-Specific Configurations (CSC)**, wherein issues related to each of the countries on the PBC agenda are discussed separately; and **(c) the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL)**, responsible for drawing lessons from past experiences and for preparing recommendations on the planning and implementation of peacebuilding actions (see Figure 2). Countries are included in the PBC agenda via requests of advice from the UNSC or the Secretary-General, or from the UNGA, ECOSOC, or the country concerned itself, as long as in “exceptional circumstances” as defined by the founding resolutions.¹⁶ The OC has 31 members,¹⁷ whilst CSCs are constituted according to the specificities of the country concerned, such as national representatives, other states in the neighbouring region, as well as non-state actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and civil society organisations.¹⁸ In CSCs meetings, video-conferencing is a recurrent tool to facilitate the participation of all stakeholders.

¹³ UNGA Resolution A/RES/60/1, of 24 October 2005, para.98.

¹⁴ Such an arrangement was not exactly the one suggested by Annan, who favoured a stronger emphasis on development in his considerations over the PBC. Indeed, he defended that the PBC “would best combine efficiency with legitimacy if it were to report to the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council [UN body responsible for addressing development-related issues] in sequence, depending on the phase of the conflict”. See Annan, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, para.116.

¹⁵ UNGA Resolution A/RES/60/180, of 30 December 2005, para.2; UNSC Resolution S/RES/1645, of 20 December 2005, para.2.

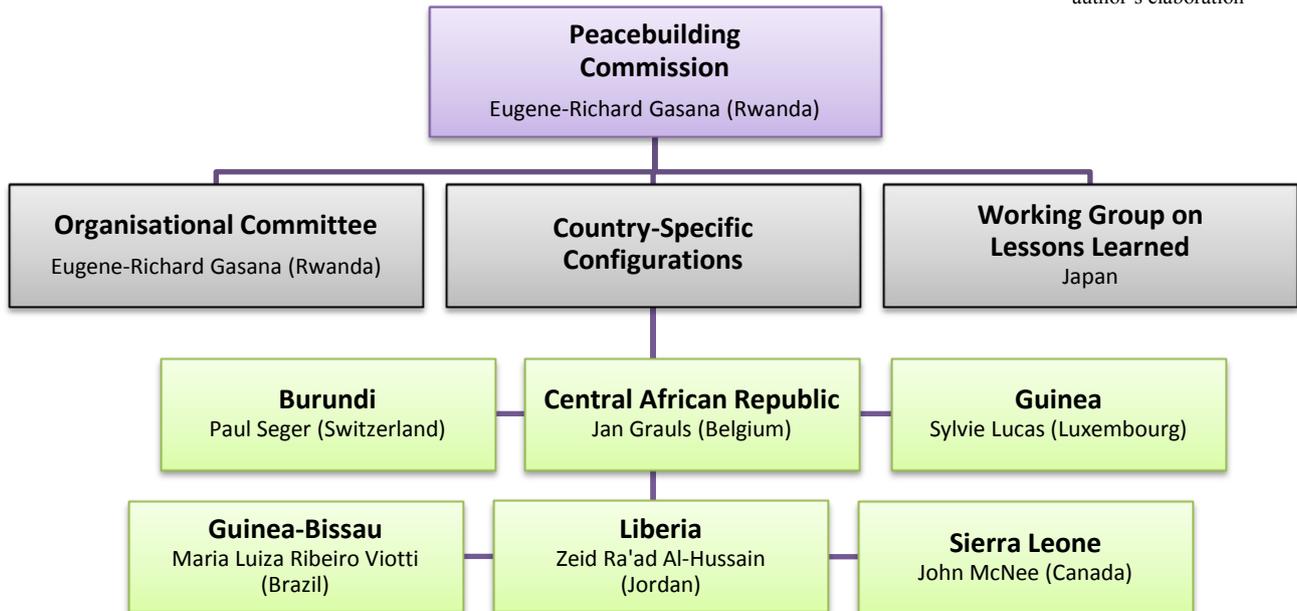
¹⁶ *Ibid.*, para.12.

¹⁷ OC members, who serve two-year renewable terms, are elected from the UNSC (7 members), the ECOSOC (7) and the UNGA (7), as well as from the group of the top contributors to the UN budget and voluntary contributions (5 members). The top five contributors of military personnel and civilian police to UN missions are also members of the OC. See *Ibid.*, para.4.

¹⁸ For current membership of the OC and the CSCs, see UNGA-UNSC, “Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its fourth session”, A/65/701-S/2011/41, of 28 January 2011, Annex I.

Figure 2: PBC's structure and current Chairs

Source: A/65/701-S/2011/41; author's elaboration



Moving forward to discussions of substantial matters, the PBC placed two countries on its agenda in June 2006: Burundi and Sierra Leone.¹⁹ Although they were quickly included in the agenda of the PBC, their particular situations only started to be systematically discussed in CSCs from 2007 on. In the same year, pivotal documents outlining the peacebuilding priorities and orienting the PBC engagement in each country were adopted: the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi (PBC/1/BDI/4, 30 July 2007) and the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/1, 12 December 2007). Documents of a similar nature would also be adopted later on, as other countries were included in the PBC agenda: the Strategic Frameworks for Peacebuilding in Guinea Bissau (PBC/3/GNB/3, 2 October 2008) and in the Central African Republic (PBC/3/CAF/7, 9 June 2009), and the Draft State-

ment of Mutual Commitments on Peacebuilding in Liberia (PBC/4/LBR/L.1, 29 October 2010). These documents are usually reviewed once every two years. In February 2011, the OC decided to include Guinea on the PBC agenda and to establish a CSC for the country in order to identify and address the country's peacebuilding priorities.²⁰ Although there is still much to be discussed and outlined for this most recent CSC, it is important to highlight that Guinea is the first country to be included on the PBC agenda responding to a country's request rather than to an UNSC referral or request, as it was the case for all other five countries.

Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

The creation of the PBF was seen as a response to the needs of countries in transformation from a situation of war to a situation of peace, with special emphasis on the early stage of the process of

¹⁹ PBC, "Letter dated 21 June 2006 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General", PBC/1/OC/2 (New York: Peacebuilding Commission, 2006).

²⁰ See UN Press Release PBC/78, "Peacebuilding Commission, placing Guinea on its agenda, names Luxembourg to Chair new Country-Specific Configuration", 23 Feb 2011.

peacebuilding and when there were no other available sources of funding. After months of analyses and consultations on the establishment of a fund for peacebuilding and disbursement mechanisms to be adopted, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the UNGA with the terms of reference for such a fund in August 2006.²¹

The terms were revised later and, according to the most recent document, the Fund should support activities that address imminent threats to peace processes, build and/or strengthen national capacities that ensure the peaceful resolution of armed conflicts, support economic revitalisation and the (re)establishment of states' essential administrative functions.²² The terms of reference also address the processes of resources allocation and disbursements,²³ as well as the financial management of the Fund, which is carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office (see Figure 1).²⁴

Regarding disbursement mechanisms, it should be stressed that not only countries listed on the PBC agenda and dealt with through CSCs may benefit from the support of the Fund. In fact, the PBF supports countries through two mechanisms: the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) and the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF). In the first mechanism, beneficiaries are countries emerg-

ing from emergency situations and in need of support to carry out peacebuilding and reconstruction actions.²⁵ The PRF, on the other hand, was designed to support structured processes of peacebuilding departing from a combined needs analysis by both the national authorities and the international community.²⁶

The most relevant political decisions concerning the PBF, such as the amount to be disbursed to funding requests, are ultimately taken by the head of the PBSO, under the authority of the UN Secretary-General. Such decisions, however, are taken only after consultations with senior UN leaderships, and both the UNSC and the UNGA may provide policy guidance.²⁷ In addition, an independent Advisory Group composed of individuals with reputable knowledge and experience in peacebuilding issues was established to provide advices to the PBSO and oversee the allocations of the PBF. The Peacebuilding Fund is maintained by voluntary contributions from member states, inter-governmental organisations and other sources, such as the private sector and individuals, as was the case of the donation made by Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, former President of the General Assembly.

The initial funding target for the PBF was 250 million dollars, a figure that was surpassed already in its second year of functioning. As of March

²¹ Report of the Secretary-General, "Arrangements for establishing the Peacebuilding Fund", A/60/984, of 22 August 2006.

²² Report of the Secretary-General, "Arrangements for the revision of the terms of reference for the Peacebuilding Fund", A/63/818, of 13 April 2009, para.2.1.

²³ *Ibid.*, para.3.1-3.7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, para.4.1-4.4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, para.3.3. The IRF was formerly known as PBF Emergency Window, whilst the PRF was once divided between the PBF Window I (for countries on the PBC agenda) and Window II (for countries not on the PBC agenda).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para.3.3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, esp. para.3.5 and 4.1.

2011, the Fund has achieved about 385 million US dollars in deposits and interests. The budget approved for the six countries currently in the PBC agenda, in the same month, totalled approximately USD 153.6 million – 45 for Sierra Leone, 39.6 for Burundi, 31 for the Central African Republic, 19.7 for Liberia, 12.3 for Guinea and 6.0 for Guinea-Bissau (amounts in USD million).²⁸

Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)

The PBSO was established as a small and highly-specialised office within the Secretariat and it is headed by an Assistant Secretary-General – meaning that the Office reports directly to the Secretary-General (see Figure 1).²⁹ The PBSO was envisaged to provide specialised technical support for the Peacebuilding Commission in all aspects and to manage the Peacebuilding Fund. Support to the PBC is provided through research and development of peacebuilding strategies for the countries addressed by the Commission. Also, based on research and on constant contacts with UN bodies in the field, policy strategies are outlined to guide the disbursement and allocation of PBF funds. The Support Office also assists the Secretary-General on matters related to peacebuilding, including coordination with other bodies within the UN system and external actors.

²⁸ MDTF, *Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office Gateway* (United Nations Development Programme, 2011 [accessed on 11 Mar 2011]); available at <http://mdtf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000>.

²⁹ UNGA Resolution A/RES/60/1, para.104. PBSO was thus placed within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Since August 2009, the ASG for Peacebuilding is Ms Judy Cheng-Hopkins (Malaysia). The Director and Deputy Head of PBSO is Mr Ejeviome Eloho Otobo (Nigeria), who is also a Senior Expert at the Global Governance Institute.

Internally, the PBSO comprises five units: (a) the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General; (b) the Policy, Planning and Application Branch, which mainly provides technical policy assistance to the PBC; (c) the PBC Support Branch, who assists the Commission and CSCs in substantive and organisational matters; (d) the Financing for Peacebuilding, whose main responsibilities are related to the policy guidance and management of the PBF; and (e) Administrative and Communications, responsible for organisational issues and outreach.³⁰

Final remarks

The UN has been undertaking actions aiming at avoiding relapses into armed conflict and at the foundation of durable peace at least since the late 1980s. Such activities were mainly carried out through organs such as the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP),³¹ but there was no specialised organ within the UN system dedicated specifically to address peacebuilding issues. According to this perspective, therefore, the establishment of the PBA is an achievement in itself simply for creating *loci* for targeted discussions and for fostering coordination among peacebuilding actors within the UN system.

Despite the establishment of the PBA, however, there remain serious challenges for the architecture in the years to come. They relate, for instance, to

³⁰ PBSO's organogram is available at <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/pbsoorganigramme.pdf> [accessed 8 Mar 2011].

³¹ See footnote 1.

the improvement of the relationship with other bodies within the UN system (especially with the UNSC and the UNGA), to the strengthening of the institutional role of the PBC, and to the need of demonstrating concrete positive impacts of the PBC and the PBF the field. Some actions undertaken in the past few years, such as the recent inclusion of Guinea on the PBA agenda based on the country's request, clearly demonstrate that the PBA has the potential to fill the gap identified in

2004 and to be truly innovative. Some of those challenges were discussed in-length by member states for many months in 2010, when the mandated review³² of the first five years of functioning of the PBA took place. That process is the main focus of GGI's research project "The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: Successes, Failures, Lessons Learned" and will be addressed in forthcoming GGI publications.

³² UNGA Resolution A/RES/60/180, para.27; UNSC Resolution S/RES/1645, para.27.