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Implementing the New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States

Presentation by: Graeme Simpson (Interpeace)

Introduction

Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers for the opportunity to present on this highly esteemed panel. It is indeed a great honor. Secondly, I would like to specifically pay tribute to the exceptional work of both of the co-chairs of the International Dialogue, Emilia Pires and Koen Davidse. Through their great efforts and the teams around them, the g7+ has found a voice and we have been bequeathed an important and impressive document in the form of the *New Deal*.

My starting point is therefore to recognize the importance of the *New Deal* as offering a critical advance on the MDG Agenda, which largely neglected to consider and take account of the impact of fragility and conflict on the aspirations and goals of the development community and particularly on the intended beneficiaries of development aid. We would have preferred if the language of the *New Deal* was more fully reflected in the final version of the Busan Outcomes Document (BOD), but in the ‘economy of words’ that tends to shape these sorts of negotiations, at least we have the explicit reference to the *New Deal* itself, and language in that document, that we can rely on more assertively.

It is in this light that we would like to affirm the specific commitments and language of the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) contained in the *New Deal*. In particular, the language on:

- “Legitimate and inclusive politics”: which clearly entails the necessary commitment to accountability, transparency, the preservation of an enabling environment for civil society to organize and operate freely, and the respect for human rights – all as the basis for structuring the relationship between state and civil society in fragile and conflict affected countries;
- The reference to “people’s security” and “access to justice”, which we consider to be a critical contribution and a clear distinction from more militarized



notions of security which are often too easily conflated with the development, peacebuilding and statebuilding agendas; and

- “Fair delivery of services”, which not only contains the sense of governments’ obligations to serve their people, but also asserts the notions of fairness and equity, rather than any tolerance of situations where the state is used to organize patronage to or favor one group over others.

Yet it is important to also acknowledge that much has been said in various forums at Busan, about the grave danger of the gap between vision-based policy on one hand, and actual implementation, capacity and delivery on the other. The danger is that failure to translate policy into delivery, especially in conflict affected and fragile societies, may well trigger frustrated expectations and do grave damage to confidence in embryonic democratic governance.

In this respect it is important to recognize that the *New Deal* represents the beginning of a process and not the end of it. The real test will be in the implementation of the *New Deal*, the piloting of it, monitoring the implementation of the PSGs, and on this basis, developing the indicators by which its success will be evaluated.

And on one condition there is clear consensus: if the *New Deal* is to be *The Real Deal*, then it has to operate not merely as an agreement between aid-recipient governments and donors, but rather as the embodiment of the social contract between these governments and their people – the people they serve.

It is very important that we don’t simply take this for granted. All too often, it is assumed that the processes of statebuilding are necessarily consistent with the goals of peacebuilding. But this can be misleading. Firstly, peacebuilding itself is not a simple or linear process and is both context-specific and particular to both the nature of the conflict and the nature of the transition in a particular place. So, for example, we cannot simply compare the exercise of statebuilding in some Latin American or Central American contexts - where transitions from autocracy to sometimes fragile or vulnerable democracy has often at least produced functional centralized states – with the roles, capacities and often the limited reach of states that emerge from transitions from war to tentative peace in some African contexts. It is not insignificant that the debates and discussions on fragility do not appear to be engaging with some of the specific processes in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans, for example. Similarly, the challenges of state transformation in the wake of the “Arab Spring” in North Africa will undoubtedly produce a novel set of issues and its own distinct political culture.

Simply put, transitions and conflict-affected contexts produce very different challenges, and state roles and state formation are varied and diverse. The dangers of

new state functions acting as a magnet for the organization of systems of patronage, the risks of corruption and the incentives to simply capture the state as a tool, cannot be ignored. There are good governments and bad governments. Some are held hostage by international criminal organizations, some are closing down rather than opening up the space for civil society, some are rights respecting and others are not... This means that it makes a big difference if we see statebuilding as simply about supporting the capacities of state institutions, rather than as being about positively transforming the relationship between states and the people they are supposed to serve. Development actors and statebuilders that are insensitive to this difference, may well do more harm than good by investing in this endeavor with scant regard for the dangers or the conflict dynamics in a country. Conflict sensitivity is a very practical concern in the relationship of statebuilding to peacebuilding and cannot simply be taken for granted.

Implications for Results Indicators and Monitoring

What are the implications of this for how we monitor the implementation of the PSGs going forward and for how we design the indicators that the *New Deal* is committed to developing over the next year or so?

Here, I will offer just four or five key points to start the conversation.... but this is more illustrative than exhaustive in a much more detailed conversation:

- Firstly, it is imperative pursuant to the PSGs, that we monitor and measure not merely the existing or improved capacity of institutions (whether in civil society or government institutions), but that we devote the necessary attention to monitoring and measuring the quality – and where necessary the transformation – of the relationships between these institutions and the society they are meant to serve. Monitoring and measuring the quality of state/society relationships – for example in respect of policing or justice – is therefore essential.
- Secondly, this means that whatever other objective indicators we develop or rely on, we need to add qualitative indicators to quantitative ones and see these as complimentary to each other. Perhaps most importantly here, it is imperative that we also privilege the polling of popular perceptions on the process and changes that we are seeking to monitor and measure, particularly on the changing relationships between state and society and the enabling environment for civil society involvement and local leadership and ownership.

- Thirdly, the process of defining the indicators and monitoring at country-level, is probably as important as the indicators themselves. This cannot be seen as an “expert”-led and driven process, but must itself be based on inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes which define goals and priorities.
- Fourthly, if the *New Deal* is going to be the *Real Deal*, and a “game-changer” in the realm of peacebuilding and state-building, then we need the courage and commitment to resource ways of monitoring and measuring some *new* things. For example, we need to be able to measure and evaluate conflict sensitivity, and test our actual ability to “do no harm”. We need to take on the hard task of monitoring and defining indicators of successful prevention (a notoriously difficult exercise because it demands that sometime we monitor and measure something that *did not happen* rather than something that did.) And instead of just monitoring and developing indicators of fragility, we need to commit to developing the tools to monitor and measure resilience, social cohesion, or the state of reconciliation within conflict affected societies as well.
- Finally, we need to recognize that in developing inclusive and reflective indicators and monitoring tools for the PSGs, the needs and expectations of ordinary people in such societies change over time. Depending on a range of factors, including the relative traction of peace processes and peacebuilding strategies in a society, ordinary people are actually very sophisticated in sequencing their needs and demands according to changing conditions. This places a very important demand on how we monitor and the flexibility required in the basket of indicators we develop and use, so that we don’t do an injustice by nailing this down as a snapshot at one particular point in time in any given society.

Challenges in Rolling-Out the *New Deal* to the Country-level

As we proceed to plan the roll-out of the *New Deal* and its PSGs to the country-level, there are similarly many key points to anticipate and keep in mind. What follows is just a brief identification of some (not all) of these:

- The first and most important point from a peacebuilding perspective is that, *at the country-level, context is everything!* In other words, not only is an inclusive multi-stakeholder process of assessing, analyzing and defining fragility and resilience essential, but fragility itself is not *one* thing, but a multi-faceted range of experiences. Not only must the implementation of the *New Deal* at the country-level depend on piloting these inclusive processes, it must also

serve to cumulatively build our analyses of fragility and the full spectrum of fragility and resilience as context-specific experiences.

- Furthermore, rolling-out the New Deal by piloting it in specific country contexts, also offers the critical opportunity to test and pilot how we understand and design local level ownership and leadership in the process. This is an opportunity to start to define inclusivity and participation, both ensuring the necessary space and enabling environment for civil society, whilst also testing and challenging our assumptions about the capacity of civil society, as well as the often assumed connections between civil society organizations themselves and the vulnerable and marginalized people who are critical stakeholders in forging durable peace in fragile and conflict-affected societies.
- In this regard, the roll-out and piloting at country-level, needs to be attentive to and prioritize the needs and experiences of particular marginalized or vulnerable groups who may not always be politically articulate or always even the targeted groups within civil society. Specifically, attention needs to be given to a dedicated focus and facilitated participation by women and youth in these pilot interventions.
- Lastly, the process of piloting and rolling out the *New Deal* at country-level, also offers an important opportunity to develop a more effective cross-departmental or “whole of government” approach to dealing with fragility and resilience in a manner that ensures development and serves the PSGs effectively. It is critical that as we move from policy to implementation, that it is not just finance ministries and the fiduciary or administrative capacities of the state that are being deployed and engaged, but that the PSGs become an agenda that is more widely owned within governments and across state institutions.

The Future of the Dialogue (on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding)

It has already been stated (and re-stated at the beginning of my presentation) that the finalization and hopefully the widespread endorsement of the *New Deal*, needs to be seen as the beginning, rather than the endpoint, of a process.

- With this in mind, we would like to strongly encourage that the dialogue between the g7+ and others (both donor governments and civil society stakeholders at national and international level) must continue.

- Not only should it continue, but as the process of piloting, testing and implementing the *New Deal* moves forward, it is our perspective that the Dialogue also needs to benefit from the deepening and expansion of civil society involvement, particularly from the global South, the g7+ countries in particular, and specifically those in which the piloting process is likely to be implemented. From the perspective of civil society organizations in general, and from Interpeace's perspective as the convener of the international civil society dialogue on peacebuilding and statebuilding to this point, we would be very committed to continuing this role and to helping to fill some of the gaps. However it is also clear that if civil society is to be fully integrated and incorporated, we need to get more creative about how we facilitate this and we need to ensure that the importance of this participation is matched by the commitment of appropriate resources to achieve the level of participation required.
- The *New Deal* is going to be most useful if it is an evolving living tool, responsive to what is learned from the country level as it is implemented and tested. In this context, one of the critical functions of the Dialogue going forward, could be its function as a "knowledge platform", a growing global community of practice on peacebuilding and statebuilding, that has as a critical component of its mandate, proactively facilitating practitioner exchanges from fragile societies, and the critical South/South learning that is so important to evolving a "living policy process" in this sphere.
- Finally, in order to optimally serve this purpose, resources also need to be committed to information flows, communities of practice and research and documentation as part of the Dialogue, so that this is a substantive and not just a process function.

In Conclusion

The points raised above are all dedicated to ensuring that the *New Deal* is the *Real Deal*. To achieve that, it must empower local communities to articulate their own peace and security needs and must guarantee that state-society relations based on accountability and inclusive participation lie at the heart of the process. In parallel, it is imperative that this vision-based policy document is rendered a living evolving one, based not on a normative framework in principle, but on translating the rhetoric into reality in practice going forward...