
Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri,
Acting Permanent Representative, General Assembly Debate of SAG's Report to SG
on Civilian Capacity Review on May 11, 2011

Mr. President,

The need for enhanced civilian capacities in post conflict situations is an important imperative that must engage our attention in the United Nations.

We are very appreciative of the work done by Mr. Jean-Marie Guehenno and the Senior Advisory Group in examining the issue in detail and making recommendations on how enhanced civilian capacities could be incorporated in the UN's work in post conflict situations.

We have noted that the Secretary-General has set up a Steering Committee to facilitate follow-up on this report and that his team will be led by Under-Secretary General Malcorra.

We are very appreciative of you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate in the General Assembly and initiating the process of inter-governmental discussions on the issues of civilian capacities in post conflict situation.

Detailed discussions will have to take place in the C-34 and the Fifth committee so that their results are inclusive. This is particularly important as peacekeeping is one of the most important of UN's enterprises.

My delegation will engage itself in these deliberations in a pro-active and constructive manner to help realize goals of enhancing civilian capacities under the United Nations in post conflict situations.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping has stood the test of time and will remain the critical pillar of UN conflict resolution activities for years to come. It also provides the umbrella for peacebuilding.

The key requirement of today is that peacekeeping is adequately resourced and its structures strengthened.

Post conflict situations and, indeed, those of prolonged conflict demand that serious attention is paid to building basic government structures and providing basic services, without which the chances of lapsing into conflict multiply manifold. The building of police capacities started many years back.

Civilian capacities, including correctional services, legal and other services which form core government functions, are very important for ensuring basic administration and need to be incorporated into the UN ambit.

Their deployment will have a major impact on the staffing, resourcing and impact of peacekeeping missions but these must neither dilute nor detract from the requirements of peacekeeping.

There will also be demands for beefing up headquarters for this enhanced civilian presence. But we need to eschew the setting up of large bureaucratic structures. Our focus must remain on the field.

Mr. President,

We are greatly encouraged by some of the fundamental assumptions of the Report, especially recognition of national ownership as the key determinant of success in preventing relapse into conflict and the importance of support to "core government functions".

It is critical that civilian capacity deployments are demand driven. Capacity mapping to locate existing capacities and identify gaps appears a useful tool.

The report has also provided interesting intellectual constructs to outline the discussion on civilian capacity. These include the "OPEN" framework and the cluster approach to identifying tasks and responsibilities in the aftermath of conflict. These could help in better defining peacebuilding priorities and tasks.

The concept of a lead agency has to be reconciled with the requirement of unity of command, so essential in peacekeeping, and to ensure that peacebuilding does not fall victim to turf battles.

Mr. President,

Recommendations on the manner in which civilian capacities are to be recruited are critical to the implementation of ideas on augmenting civilian capacities.

My delegation believes that the recruitment model should give primacy to a partnership with governments of Member-States and involve the secondment of government officials.

This has a number of advantages. It gives the United Nations rapid access to the required capacities; it allows rapid scaling-up and scaling-down of capacities and facilitates burden-sharing amongst Member States.

Above all it provides capacities that are trained to work in and establish government structures and would mesh well with the peacekeeping personnel on the ground.

Peacekeeping is amongst the most effective of all United Nations ventures and its force generation model may be the most appropriate for recruiting civilian capacities. It is important to ensure a gender balance.

Mr. President,

My delegation also believes that the capacities that are being sourced must be relevant to the conditions in post-conflict situations.

Here it stands to reason that the expertise that is most relevant is in fellow developing countries that have undertaken successful efforts in recent times in building governance structures and arranging for better delivery of basic services.

The lessons that they have learnt and the capacities that they have developed are of great significance in this exercise.

There is an international shift in many fields towards sourcing capabilities from the global South driven by sound economic and functional considerations.

United Nations efforts to source capacities from developing nation would be in consonance with these broad trends based on economies and efficiencies.

Mr. President,

The key challenge is implementation.

While there is growing interest in post-conflict situations on the part of many international organizations, the United Nations remains in the eyes of the affected, the most credible and legitimate representative of the international community.

It's peacekeeping activities have provided the bedrock of this trust. It is imperative that civilian capacities add to this credibility.

Thank you.

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