An Opening for Transformation: Three Security Reviews

2016 Kofi Annan/Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture

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Accra, Ghana 19 April 2016

Excellencies, Hon Ministers and senior officials, members of parliament, Chief of Defence Staff and and Service Commanders, Commandant Major General O.B. Akwa - our host at the KAIPTC, Mr Henrik Hammargren, Executive Director of the Dag Hammarsjöld Foundation, my dear colleague Dr Baffour Agyeman-Duah, members of the media, friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

1.   **Appreciation**

Returning to Accra has put a smile on my face.   I left West Africa last year after three years as the SRSG and head of UNMIL.   UNMIL benefited tremendously from our Ghanaian soldiers.

When Ebola spread, the Government of Ghana not only maintained its soldiers in UNMIL, but also kept its borders open and allowed the UN to resume our flights from Monrovia to Accra.   This was a lifeline.   These acts of tremendous support and solidarity reinforced the world's appreciation of Ghana's valour in international peace and security.   On a lighter note, our Ghanaian soldiers also, during our medal parades, introduced me to the wonderful Ghanaian High Life!   Thank you, Ghana, on all counts.

2.   Hammarskjöld and Annan

A question which by now has become a bit of a cliché is whether the UN Secretary-General is more of a secretary, or more of a general?   Is the SG the chief bureaucrat, or a visionary and dreamer?   Dag Hammarskjöld wanted the UN to be a dynamic instrument for change, and initiated a number of reforms, as did Kofi Annan including through the Brahimi Report in 2000.   Both men presided over significant changes in UN peacekeeping.

The UN needs a Secretary-General of tremendous political savvy, vision and integrity, and a powerful communicator.   Dag Hammarskjöld and Kofi Annan share many distinctions, during their periods as UN Secretaries-General, including these.   I'm honoured to speak to you in commemoration of these colleagues.   Thank you for the opportunity.

It's timely to do so, as the UN approaches the selection of its next Secretary-General.   Last week, anyone, anywhere in the world with good bandwidth could tune in as the UN's 193 member states, and civil society, put questions to the nine now-declared candidates for UN SG.   Injecting this level of transparency in the selection process is revolutionary.   We have civil society to thank for the campaign, - and member states for recognising the *zeitgeist.*

Clearly, we - as UN member states, as partners, as civil society, and even as UN personnel - can be heard on matters of vital importance to how the UN functions in the coming decades.   The 2015 reviews - of UN Peace Operations, of Sustaining Peace, and of Women in Peace and Security are rich in reflections and in recommendations.   They recognize that as the nature of conflict continues to change, the UN must change too, if it hopes to remain true to its founding purpose, preventing and responding to the scourge of war.

Now, with a change in UN leadership imminent, we must maintain the momentum of last year's peace and security reviews.   Gatherings such as this will help to do so.

Many of the questions to the candidates for SG, last week, reflected the 2015 reviews: questions on prevention, on root causes of conflict, on regional organisations, and on peacekeeper abuses.   I will expand on some of these.

3. Multiple entry points to disorder and fragility

I was heading UNMIL when Ebola broke out in Liberia. After 2014, those outbreaks became small and sporadic, but when the epidemic first exploded there, in late July 2014, it quickly became more than a health crisis: it became a food crisis, an economic crisis; in some locations, security deteriorated sharply. Mistrust of the government was pronounced, and space seemed to open up for potential political mischief.

Liberia's peace survived Ebola. UNMIL's contribution was significant. But the experience was a reminder that where institutions are weak, there can be many entry points for disorder and regression. That is the essence of state fragility.

Liberia paid a high price in human lives, with close to 5000 dead. Economic growth fell to near zero, young people lost a school year, some reforms, including in the security sector, were set back as activities that required human proximity were sharply limited, other than caring for the sick and burying the dead. Ebola showed how not having a trusting, inclusive society deepened a health crisis, how a health crisis undermined security, how both caused the economy to contract.

The #1 recommendation of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations [henceforth **HIPPO**] is to prioritize conflict prevention. This is echoed by the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts [henceforth **AGE]** for reviewing the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and, with a gendered perspective, also by the Report on Security Council Resolution 1325.

4. Root causes

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

In 2012, as I was saying my goodbyes in Burundi (which was then a UN Special Political Mission) to take up my functions as SRSG in Liberia, a senior Burundian government official said, "oh,- Liberia is still a peacekeeping operation.   We are ahead of them!"

This is painful to recall.   In the past year, a quarter of a million people have fled Burundi.   Every day, there are killings.   If Burundi is a test of prevention, and of international resolve, we've had one year of failure.   It's a test for the UN, for the AU, and for the EAC, the East African Community.

The HIPPO report says that, "a prevention culture has not been embraced by the Organisation and its Member States.   The UN has not sufficiently invested in addressing root causes of conflict, nor does it engage early enough in emerging crises."

In 1981 I sat in a small gathering with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in Geneva as he presented his thoughts on addressing "root causes".   Over my 35 years of working across the UN I grew sceptical of that debate.   I never doubted that root causes exit, but I questioned our ability, as the international community, to marshal the complexity of those causes into a clear and honest narrative.   And, from there, into a strategy - a strategy that favours political solutions, rather than leading us to more war.

But this is precisely what these reviews exhort.   To work for a joined-up, collective UN agenda to prevent conflict before it begins, to keep the focus on political solutions even at the height of crisis.

Thus the need to start with a shared concept, and that is my first point. The UN family will need to invest more in reaching a shared political analysis, in understanding and articulating the elements that help keep particular countries and societies stable, and where these elements have failed and have become drivers of conflict.   Delivering this analysis requires deep understanding of a country's history and dynamics. This will benefit from the contribution of experts.

Of course there is political sensitivity in shining a light on fragility.   And there is a perception of hierarchy: in 2011 a Burundian minister told me, tongue in cheek,   that if Belgium went much longer without a government, Burundi would propose to host a global meeting to discuss Belgium's fragility.

5.   A shared strategic vision

As a former UN USG for Peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, has

written, "The most difficult challenge for a foreigner who becomes involved in the aftermath of a civil war is to find the right balance between the humility to listen and the courage to press hard."

In finding that balance, and a nuanced assessment of how a nationally-owned peace can be supported and sustained, some caution should apply to lessons learned elsewhere, in vastly different settings. Such lessons are a useful starting point for questions, not global prescriptions.

Two things can contribute to developing a shared strategic vision. One is the clear analysis which I have mentioned, for which the New Deal's Fragility Assessment is a useful model. The other is the strong engagement of regional organisations - in this region, that would include ECOWAS and further west, the Mano River Union. That is the second point I would like to emphasise. Mr Guéhenno referred to the challenge for foreigners, but some are less foreign and potentially well-placed to take a lead.

Partnering with regional and sub-regional actors is vital, as underlined by two of the reviews. This partnering may be political, economic, diplomatic, - and it may be military. In the 1990s, the ECOWAS engagement in Liberia was controversial. It was also tenacious, and it changed the trajectory of ECOWAS itself, with its 1993 treaty and its later Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

ECOWAS has subsequently intervened in several crises, and ECOWAS countries have the potential (I would suggest) to engage more deeply with one another in the strengthening of national institutions and in addressing transnational threats.

6. **Who's ahead of whom?**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

All partner support should be geared towards helping nurture societies that are past the point of deteriorating readily into conflict. As the Secretary-General has said, "Prevention is not something to be turned on

and off." Rather, it should be "an integral part of United Nations action in all contexts." Another policy document on the end of UN peace operations, No Exit Without Strategy (issued 15 years ago tomorrow), speaks of "moving the process past the point of no return". In fragile settings, that point is hard to know; it's hard to know when one is "ahead".

In peacekeeping, one sometimes hears, "it's been ten years!", or "the country has held two elections!", and therefore, it's suggested, it's time for peacekeepers to pack up. Peacekeeping operations are expensive, and I understand the pressure to find an end point. But this issue of peacekeeping transition requires a nuanced assessment, as well.

As Liberia's Ebola experience illustrates, every fragile country is somewhere on a spectrum of preventing conflict - or preventing its recurrence. Fragility means that there is no clear-cut before and after. This logic has consequences for how we work - our thinking must become much less linear, our responses, more joined-up.

There are no quick fixes for countries recovering from conflict, where trust, institutions, livelihoods and much else needs to be rebuilt. The AGE report argues that "the separation between preventive and post-conflict measures is artificial" (NUPI).

7. A common Agenda for Action

Let's talk about implementation. The UN should follow a fragility assessment with a conflict-sensitive programme of practical and political engagement, and this joined-up ideal is my third point. This ideal remains frustrated within a fragmented UN, as lucidly discussed in the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. This report says, "Unless we succeed in breaking the silos within our governments, between the UN principal organs, and between and within the UN Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes, we will fail the peoples that we are mandated to serve."

Make no mistake, breaking the silos will be hard to do. Even though the collective agenda to find political solutions, prevent and mediate conflict is the very purpose of the UN, we have not for the most part - by "we" I mean the UN and partner countries - been very good at developing a coherent agenda for support to countries emerging from conflict, or to prevent them

sinking deeper into it.

The UN family as a whole, operating on the ground in fragile situations, needs fresh energy in uniting around support to stronger national institutions, and to greater social cohesion. This will require persuasion, engagement and understanding - and, critically, the support of donor and partner governments - who may themselves operate in silos. The UN will reform when governments agree that it should. ECOWAS Member States can themselves encourage a more unified UN programme of work at country level.

8.   **Peaceful societies are a long-term commitment**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Peaceful societies are a long-term commitment. The AGE report points out that creating legitimate institutions that can help prevent relapse takes a generation; that "even the fastest--transforming countries in the last century took between 15 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from the level that prevails in many of today's fragile states."

And all this requires a longer investment than the lifespan of the average UN peacekeeping or political operation. But it's not only about duration. It's about a shift in how we understand partner support. In development assistance programmes and peacebuilding assistance, priorities and financing are misaligned, says the AGE report: assistance remains tiny to the critical peacebuilding sectors, including legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations, and revenues and services. Just 3 % of ODA was spent on justice in 2012, for example. A shift in this prioritization is also the logic behind Sustainable Development Goal 16, and helping to build inclusive societies.

In Liberia, several structural factors helped Ebola prosper. You'll recognise these from your own experiences across a range of fragile and post-conflict countries - weak services in health, education, sanitation; political systems people don't fully trust; and corruption and patronage undermining both security and justice.

Preventing conflict, or preventing relapse, and seeking to resolve problems

politically, needs to pay more attention to the role of the citizen - after all, when we use the term inclusive, we mean inclusive of people. Are political and economic institutions inclusive? Is there a democratic relationship between state and citizens; an egalitarian power relationship among different identity groups? I am quoting a Nepali analyst, here; these questions are universal.

Resilient institutions are not simply about having something called a parliament - or courts called courts. If parliamentarians don't represent their constituents, and courts don't deliver justice, the citizen will place little value in these institutions. Resilient institutions are those which the citizen is ready to rely on instead of taking political power or justice into his or her own hands.

But in some fragile countries, one or two generations have grown up without seeing "legitimate politics"; without seeing reliable institutions. We are expecting the populations of war-torn countries to imagine something, to believe in something, they have never experienced themselves. And the politicians, judges and police themselves may lack good role models from the past, and have little tradition of accountability. Building resilient institutions can presuppose a very large change in human behaviour. We tend, I find, to focus on building the institutions, and assume human behaviour will follow.

But people are not projects.

And this is the core of my fourth point: even more than addressing the timeline problem, and the prioritisation problem, it's incumbent on us to reflect more deeply on the meaning of inclusive and broad-based national ownership - including the active participation of women and youth - in peace processes and in sustaining peace. That is the essence of "people-centred process". Civil society organizations are valuable. They don't replace the inclusiveness, the social bonds, the civic engagement that strong societies require.

Travelling in Liberia after the worst of Ebola, I heard a county youth coordinator say, "What I liked best about Evola was out togetherness." Yet, in mid-term senatorial elections at the time, turnout was extremely low, under 25%. Not for fear of Ebola, as far as we could ascertain, but because of low expectations of politics and politicians.

Let me mention two examples of contributions supporting inclusiveness and engagement, namely UNMIL Radio, which reaches 85% of the population, and UNMIL County Offices, which were present in all fifteen counties. These put UNMIL in unusually close touch with communities. The UN is often not present at that level, and needs to be, to understand and respond to the dynamics which may so different from the experience of elites in capital cities.

Let us also recognise limits to what the international community can do. After conflict, societies face the challenge of making sense of their shared past and learning to live together again. Finding reconciliation, defining justice, reaching national consensus, can only be driven by national leaders. Governments need to be fully engaged and committed, and for this there is more attention being paid now to government compacts in support of sustaining peace.

9. Trusting relationships and the calibre of peacekeepers

These three political and security reviews of 2015 provide an opening for transformation in how the UN works to prevent conflict and to help sustain peace. There is one more ingredient. At a UN discussion last week on peace operations, we heard the word "trust" again and again.   Perhaps the greatest demand on the next Secretary-General will be to build a strong environment of trust in, and within, the UN. Trust, said one Permanent Representative, will also make peacekeeping more effective and efficient.

I cannot speak at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre without underlining the importance of the calibre of peacekeepers, military and civilian, and of leadership. The ongoing reports of extensive sexual exploitation and abuse, the questions around responsibility for the spread of fatal disease, have tarnished the UN. Disciplined performance and strong accountability will enhance trust, and centres such as this can contribute greatly to that culture.

As for the next Secretary-General, the HIPPO report tells us that the best UN leaders are remembered for their courage, vision, integrity, humility and ability to inspire others. Just five qualities, really… Those five qualities have never been more important to fulfilling the world's hopes and expectations of the UN. May the qualities of Hammarskjöld and Annan

continue to guide us.

Thank you.