



PRESS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Women, youth are key to peacebuilding success – UN official

NEW YORK, 6 June 2007: The promotion of a culture of peace and the drive to empower women to participate in peacebuilding processes must involve both women and the youth, Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, has said.

Speaking when he co-chaired a day-long seminar on “Enhancing Security and the Rule of Law: how gender could be better integrated into the priorities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)” in New York today, the senior UN official said that more focus should be made on how gender could be integrated into the priorities of the PCB. He emphasised that unless both women and youth were actually involved in decision making processes as well as actions that economically empowered them, the success of the programme could not be assured. Success would only be assured by integrating youth in all aspects of the Peacebuilding Commission and a deliberate decision made to put them at the heart of that effort.

Noting that pre-conflict peacebuilding was just as important as post-conflict peacebuilding, Mr. Chowdhury focused his attention on the efforts of the United Nations, by calling on the Organization to especially strengthen its leadership at the “ground level” where, he said, at present was not oriented to providing the much needed support to the PBC. In that regard, he urged the UN Country Teams’ active involvement, explaining everyone should be appropriately motivated to working towards the implementation of priorities of the PBC. He said UN Resident Coordinators and Resident Representatives should be the main persons to work closely with governments at the country level.

He stressed that the mere abundance and availability of resources and enactment of gender-sensitive laws that guaranteed certain quotas of positions to women in themselves did not entail women’s empowerment unless policy makers, cooperating partners and the stakeholders such laws were actually translated their words into action by implementing the actions already agreed upon, a view that was also shared by other panellists during the course of the seminar.

The one-day seminar, hosted by the Delegation of the European Commission to the United Nations and the Liaison Office of the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, was jointly chaired by Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN. It brought together a range of government and UN actors as well as civil society representatives who are working to consolidate peace in Burundi and Sierra Leone. The seminar reviewed the situations in Sierra Leone and Burundi, the first two countries picked to participate in the PBC's programme. Mr Chowdhury chaired the panel on Sierra Leone, while the panel on Burundi was chaired by Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN.

Several speakers asserted that gender was not a women's only issue, and that producing and delivering peacebuilding was a bottom-up process; it had to start with the persons involved and not with those trying to assist.

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