
SESSION II: GETTING THE SEQUENCING RIGHT

If peace-building and reconstruction are to be implemented in an early and effective manner, these priority areas must be addressed with an appropriate sequence of policy responses. As well, responsibility for matching policies with priorities needs to be organized at the international level for maximum efficiency. The specific priorities discussed above may be grouped into three broad categories for action: 1) evolving representative political processes; 2) establishing legitimate internal order and stability; and 3) economic and social reconstruction. Together, these three objectives respond to the human security needs of war-torn societies.

Of these three broad categories, however, it was noted that the first priority that must be addressed at the outset is the establishment of internal order and stability at the popular level. The need for a return to effective law and order is central to the peace-building process, and must be addressed as soon as possible. Specific mechanisms to support this could include the disarming and demobilisation of combatants, including irregular militant groups; restructuring and education of state police and security forces to ensure civilian control and an end to impunity; weapons buy-back programs; institutionalisation of transparency and accountability, to ensure that security forces remain apolitical; and reform of the courts system to ensure accessibility and protection of human rights. Impartial mechanisms to investigate past atrocities, such as truth commissions, can also play a stabilising role.

It was noted that the international community has tended to concentrate its reconstruction efforts on the period between the end of hostilities and the installation of a representative government. In particular, electoral support has been viewed as the policy intervention of choice for the donor community, even in the absence of a negotiated resolution of hostilities. Such assistance has been given for very *short* periods of time, usually from one to two years, and tends to *decrease* over this time period rather than remaining constant. Neither of these past practices is very useful for sustainable post-conflict reconstruction. There is even the probability that the urge to hold an early election will result in a premature closure of the necessary *political reform process*. Closing this window of opportunity to evolve effective, participatory political processes does a disservice to these societies. Related to this is the need for popular recognition of the political process as *legitimate*. An interim government may be more appropriate, while political reform is being carried out, *before* elections are held to legitimate a reformed political process and its institutional manifestation.

Rather than beginning when hostilities are suspended, international support for peace-building should be organized around each of the four phases of a peace process: