

May 26, 2005

Statement by Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Acting US Representative to the United Nations, on Post-Conflict Peace-building, in the Security Council, May 26, 2005

Thank you Madam President.

With today's Presidential Statement, the members of the United Nations Security Council have demonstrated a renewed commitment to an improved post-conflict peace-building process. The United States welcomes this commitment with energy and enthusiasm. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in February of this year, the United States is "working to strengthen international capacities to address conditions in failed, failing, and post conflict states." At the same time, President Bush has charged us with strengthening our national capacity in this area through better coordination of our nation's post conflict and stabilization efforts. Today's PRST is an important first step toward improving the focus and organization of our peace-building efforts, and we appreciate the presence of the Danish Foreign Minister and the efforts of the Danish delegation to raising this significant issue during Denmark's presidency of the Security Council.

Failing or failed states, and those emerging from conflict, pose great challenges to international security. Without coordinated internal and international peace-building efforts, these states can become breeding grounds for terrorism, crime, trafficking in persons and other human catastrophes. And the problems in such countries are infectious. They spread to neighboring regions like a virulent disease, bringing chaos, misery, and despair to the lives of millions of innocent civilians.

The United States has demonstrated its commitment to the post conflict peace-building process, and we are working to further strengthen our capacity to contribute to international efforts in this area. The new office of the State Department will lead, coordinate, and institutionalize the US Government's civilian capacity to prevent and respond to conflict.

The United Nations has long endeavored to reduce the risk that nations emerging from conflict will fall back into a state of conflict. But, like all governments and international organizations, the UN has enjoyed only limited success. There has been a distinct and counterproductive lack of coordination among UN peacekeeping operations, development initiatives, financing initiatives and other key elements of long-term peace and prosperity. For this reason, we welcome the Secretary General's proposal to create a Peace--building Commission to improve the coordination of UN systems, policies, and country-specific operations from the start of peacekeeping efforts through stabilization and reconstruction activities.

There has been a significant amount of discussion about where in the UN system the Peace-building Commission should reside and how it should function. We see the Peace-building Commission as an advisory body that operates on a consensus basis to provide both expertise and a coordination capacity to the principal UN bodies. It is vital that

such a commission include in its membership both those with the most at stake and those with the most to contribute.

Therefore, while the security of a country is on the agenda of the Security Council, the Security Council should be the UN body that invokes the Commission's structure, wisdom and capacity. We recognize, however that the Peace-building Commission must extend beyond the Security Council. We agree with the Secretary General that, once the Council determines that a post conflict situation no longer requires its oversight, the Commission could so inform other UN organs and agencies - which will have participated in the Commission's work from the beginning.

There has also been a significant amount of discussion of how to fund peace-building and reconstruction efforts. The United States does not accept the overly simplistic solution of merely increasing assessed contributions to the UN.

Such an approach is at odds with the budgeting process in the U.S. and elsewhere. For example, the expenses of demobilization efforts and the expenses of reintegration are funded from different parts of the U.S. national budget and, therefore, require a more refined approach to funding than simply increasing assessed contributions. The various aspects of peace-building are subject to different laws and different regulatory requirements, and their funding requirements must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The challenge is for donor countries to make their funding mechanisms more flexible and responsive to the needs of post-conflict countries. As a major donor, my government is currently working on means to increase the flexibility of our funding response mechanism.

While the United States looks forward to improving its own peace-building activities and is encouraged by the Secretary General's proposal for a UN Peace-building Commission, we also recognize the critical role that hundreds of nongovernmental organizations and their dedicated staffs have had - and will continue to have - in the peace-building process. We will continue to establish strong partnerships with NGOs, including groups that advocate the rights of women, as well as think tanks, private foundations, academics and operational experts, so that their collective capacity and knowledge can assist us in improving the lives of those living in regions coming out of conflict.

Finally, peaceful transition cannot succeed without local stakeholders. We at the UN should never view our role as paternalistic or didactic. We cannot allow key local groups to be sidelined or marginalized in post conflict regions.

While we on the outside can and must assist, we must remember that the impetus for development must come from within the country or region at issue.

Democracy and freedom must come from within. Peace comes from within the spirit of a people seeking to put a dark past behind them.

The United States is the largest contributor to the assessed budget of the UN. It is the largest donor of development assistance in the world. It has the most generous private donors in the world, supported by a national tax system that encourages philanthropy. We remain committed to providing resources, in a monitored and coordinated manner, to all aspects of the peace-building process. We look forward to working with the UN, its member states, regional organizations, and

local authorities in countries emerging from crisis, to further our mutual goal of seeking stable, democratic governments in regions that have for too long been ruled by oppression and conflict.

Thank you, Madam President.