

## **REPORT**

FriEnt/FES-Expert Discussion

### **A New Deal for the Peacebuilding Commission?**

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Venue: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)  
Hiroshimastr. 17 | 10785 Berlin

## FriEnt

FriEnt is a Working Group of: Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) | Church Development Service (EED) | Civil Peace Service Group | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH | Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) | Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) | Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbs) | Misereor/Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid | Platform for Peaceful Conflict Management/Institute for Development and Peace (INEF)

FriEnt aims to pool capacities, support networking and cooperation, and contribute to conflict-sensitive development cooperation. FriEnt's members are committed to working together to promote a range of approaches and highlight the potential of development-oriented peace work to policy-makers and the public at large.

FriEnt's members are united by their great commitment to peace and development. They vary, however, in their size, mandate, international partners, projects and approaches. They aim to utilise their diverse perspectives and experience as an asset for their shared productive work on peacebuilding in the context of development cooperation.

### Imprint

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2014, FriEnt convened an expert roundtable discussion for policymakers, practitioners and researchers to discuss the interlinkages between the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.


The discussion set-off with expert input from both the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and the New Deal Process about the current state-of-affairs in the respective institutional process and a short discussion with participants. In a second step, the discussion aimed to tease out potential synergies and collaboration opportunities between the two otherwise mostly separated policy and practitioner communities. This report has been drafted under Chatham House Rules.


## 2. FRIENT'S FAVOURITES – OUR CORE TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION


 Remember the PBC's and New Deals core rationales:


- The UN Peacebuilding Architecture in the narrower sense is meant to fill gaps in the UN's peace and security architecture writ large. In most cases it still needs to live up to this ambition.
- The New Deal is meant to address important flaws in the patterns of donor assistance but the necessary shift of attitudes and institutional culture will still take quite some time.

Both rationales remain highly important and relevant. Since they are highly ambitious, however, peacebuilding stakeholders are well-advised to remain committed and practice strategic patience with these processes and institutions.

 The relevance of locally-led processes and the need to increase the space for inclusive national dialogues are widely acknowledged rationales but they are still not consistently conceptualized for the respective processes.

 Whereas the acceptance of the crucial role of civil society is also widely acknowledged in all relevant policy processes, its practical inclusion remains inconsistent. International civil society and donors each have roles to play in assuring that governments provide the space and that local civil society is equipped to fill it. At the same time it is clear that parallel processes may overburden civil society with a complexity of different processes, terminologies and formal requirements.

 The combined discussion about the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture and the New Deal emphasized the lack of cooperation between topically related policy processes. This reflects both divisions within national governments between the diplomatic and development communities and between different national governments. Any window of opportunity to overcome these gaps and tap the potential for more synergies should be eagerly seized by peacebuilding stakeholders.

 Both the New Deal and the Peacebuilding Commission must be guarded against a tendency to focus on technical questions instead of political ones. While the technical aspects of peacebuilding and development are often less controversial and promise faster results, it is the political dimension of any peacebuilding engagement, that will determine long-term success or failure.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Within the global peacebuilding community, a multitude of processes and frameworks operate in parallel, often pursuing almost identical concepts and objectives. However, these processes are implemented by different actors, quickly resulting in the formation of silos. The work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States are obvious examples: three countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Central African Republic) feature on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission and, at the same time, are New Deal pilot countries. Elsewhere, New Deal implementation is taking place in parallel to UN peacekeeping missions in-country. In these scenarios, coherence, cooperation and complementarity remain ongoing challenges.

To what extent can initial experience with implementing the New Deal feed into the forthcoming review of the UN peacebuilding architecture? Where do linkages and overlaps between the two processes exist, and how can silo mentalities be overcome? Is there a need to align objectives in order to develop a coherent environment for peacebuilding and statebuilding? What are the opportunities and challenges for civil society engagement?

These questions were explored at a FriEnt/FES seminar, “A New Deal for the Peacebuilding Commission?” which began with an overview of recent developments in the two processes.

### 4. STATE OF AFFAIRS WITH REGARD TO THE NEW DEAL IMPLEMENTATION

“The New Deal’s potential is still untapped” – this core message of the recently published New Deal monitoring report attracted broad support during the discussion. Launched with great hopes in 2011, the New Deal was intended to bring about nothing less than a paradigm shift in development cooperation with fragile and conflict-affected states – away from the traditional donor-recipient relationship towards the use of local capacities and structures, more transparency, mutual accountability and donor coordination. However, as some participants pointed out, key government institutions and civil society are still not fully engaged in many cases and there is often a lack of basic awareness of the processes. Local ownership – according to one expert with in-country experience – often amounts to mere rhetoric: in reality, practical engagement is still based on traditional paradigms.

Accordingly, some participants noted that while fragile countries of course are highly interested in attracting new funds, there are no specific financial incentives linked to the New Deal. Furthermore, there is no clear understanding about the practical implications of using host country systems. While some pilot countries think that this is implying the call for mere “budget support”, some actors would not like to equate the two. Furthermore, the lack of trust between governments, civil society and the international community in some cases was highlighted as a crucial factor why processes stall. Even among donors, there is still a strong risk aversion which often keeps individual donor countries from handing over to/aligning with “lead donors”.

#### Links & Literature

[A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States](#)

[New Deal Monitoring Report 2014](#)

[Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding](#)

[A New Deal for Fragile States: International Engagement after Busan](#)

Workshop Report | FriEnt | 2012

More specifically, acute crises such as those affecting New Deal pilot countries South Sudan and the Central African Republic mean that the respective New Deal processes cannot continue, although the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) provides an ongoing forum for dialogue. In South Sudan, according to one line of argument, the Fragility Assessment failed to address politically sensitive issues. This shows that there is a one-sided focus on the New Deal's technical implementation, overshadowing the political dimension. However, it is precisely the emphasis on the political dimension that encapsulates the true spirit and added value of the New Deal. Therefore, one criticism was that the New Deal and the PSGs lead to a sort of "choose from the menu" approach that might result in the most important aspects remaining unaddressed.

On the other hand, major advances have also been achieved. As some participants emphasised, the New Deal has helped to strengthen state-society relations where previously, communication channels were blocked and mistrust prevailed. Civil society actors who were often overlooked in the past have thus been able to bring their voices into the dialogue. However, ensuring legitimacy is an ongoing challenge: the question of "which civil society" should be involved in the implementation is becoming ever more relevant, not least because there is now stronger demand for civil society expertise in the New Deal processes, including from **g7+** governments. But more generally the levels of inclusion of civil society vary from country to country.

On the international level, civil society organizations have been participating in the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding from the beginning. They were closely monitoring the process and have been able to bring important issues on the agenda, for example the recognition that open and constructive relations between state and society constitute a key element for successful peacebuilding and the inclusion of gender aspects. The Civil Society Platform on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is a Southern-Northern non-governmental coalition that helps coordinate civil society participation in the global policy processes and supports local civil society engagement in the implementation of the New Deal commitments.

In view of the New Deal's potential, on the one hand, and its somewhat modest achievements, on the other, one recommendation focused on managing expectations: all stakeholders need to show more "strategic patience", for it is impossible to change institutions and patterns of behaviour overnight. And the main impetus of the New Deal, namely to address important flaws in patterns of donor assistance, should definitively be worth this strategic patience.

## **5. THE UN PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE ON THE EVE OF THE 2015 REVIEW**

The discussion about the forthcoming review of the UN peacebuilding architecture also explored ways of managing expectations about the role and comparative advantage of the three recently established components of the Architecture, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. As a prelude to the discussion, participants were reminded of the original motivation for establishing the Peacebuilding Commission, namely to bridge gaps, which were identified by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004) and the UN-Secretary General's report "In Larger Freedom" (2005): firstly, between short-term crisis management and long-term development, and, secondly, between the various institutional silos within the UN system. To address these gaps, three new elements of a peacebuilding architecture were established:

- The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as an intergovernmental organ, comprised of member states,
- The Peacebuilding Fund, to provide Catalytic funding for Peacebuilding projects,
- The Peacebuilding Support Office as the institutional locus within the UN Secretariat in New York to provide support to the PBC and manage the PBF.

However, one assessment in the debate was that already in the inception phase different views among member states led the architecture in a different direction. It was argued, that while states from the Global South emphasized that the lack of resources for peacebuilding was the core problem, OECD states perceived the institutional fragmentation at the UN to be the bottle neck. The first review process in 2010 then showed that the institutional elements, which were established from 2005 onwards, lack the institutional weight needed to bring about a radical change in approach and working methods within the UN and the international community. What's more, it was recalled during the debate, some of the procedures established by the Peacebuilding Commission and its country-specific configurations are simply too complex and unwieldy, overstretching national stakeholders capacities to engage meaningfully and get the most out of the Commission.

Yet, the review also concluded that, while the momentum of 2005 was lost, the rationale and mission for the new Peacebuilding Architecture remain valid. Furthermore, an unpublished paper for the internal use of the UN and commissioned in the run-up to the forthcoming review, showed that the Peacebuilding Commission has indeed had some positive effects, e.g. in Burundi and Sierra Leone. In these cases, the peacebuilding architecture has indeed closed systemic gaps and has generated added value, in the sense of consolidating peace. Furthermore, the improvement in performance of the Peacebuilding Fund between 2010 and 2014 was highlighted by one participant.

Overall, however, a quite critical perception of the peacebuilding architecture has become entrenched in recent years. This was also reflected in the discussion. Although the opportunities and potential afforded by the current review process were emphasised, this was not enough to convince the sceptics at the table, who are not anticipating any radical changes to the UN system's working methods in the peacebuilding field. Against the background of the institutional dynamics in New York and the diplomatic standoffs between various governments from among the UN member states, any breakthrough, it was argued would be highly unlikely. In the case of peacebuilding and dealing with fragile states the institutional attribution of responsibilities presents another crucial obstacle to reform: While the responsibility for dealing with these challenges usually rests with diplomats in ministries of foreign affairs the funds usually are often administered by separate development cooperation branches of government. Furthermore, any substantial (and accordingly also potentially painful) reform, would require a sense of urgency and importance within the organization by expanding the narrow interpretation of the "peacebuilding architecture" to include a broader set of political and operational actors beyond the three components established in 2005. Yet, modest and incremental reform steps that might result in some progress were perceived to be feasible.

With regard to the format of the upcoming review it was very positively noted that the 2015 review process will deliberately be preceded by an independent evaluation of peacebuilding efforts in both PBC Agenda and non-Agenda Countries. Irrespective of the impact of such

#### Links & Literature

[UN Peacebuilding Commission](#)

[White Paper on Peacebuilding](#)

Geneva Peacebuilding Platform | 2015

evaluation on the subsequent diplomatic review process, the evaluations themselves might be very helpful contributions to the international as well as German policy debate about peacebuilding practice. Furthermore, it was appreciated that Germany shows a heightened interest in the current review. It was traditionally one of the major champions of the PBC, both at its inception in 2005 and during its first review in 2010 and one participant reminded of the strong German interest to have a political forum in addition to the UN Security Council, to combine development considerations with peace and security considerations. From a German perspective it was in turn argued, that the current focus of the PBC on coherence of the peacebuilding engagement in agenda countries on the one hand and advocacy for agenda countries on the other, was not enough. The PBC would need a more political mandate and the case of Burundi and the approach of the chair of that configuration would exemplarily show how such a role could look like.

## 6. UN PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE AND THE NEW DEAL: SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES OR CONTINUED SEGREGATION?

The final session focused on potential synergies and linkages between the two processes. Just how little this still has to do with the work of local peace activists was immediately apparent from the input of a CSO representative from Sierra Leone, who said that although he works on similar topics to those addressed in the New Deal and discussed within the UN Peacebuilding Commission framework, there is no direct linkage at present.

His local perspective was taken up in the discussion. Peacebuilding is a local process and must be embedded at the local level. This means that local knowledge and local strategies should be the starting point when thinking about strengthening synergies and coherence between various processes, in order to achieve pragmatic convergence of in-country processes. This also means investing in local leadership capacities and creating scope for civil society engagement. Transparency on all sides is a prerequisite for achieving a better division of labour and clearer mandates. Clearly defined overarching goals may also be useful as a reference framework for the various international and local actors – which is why including peace and good governance goals in the post-2015 agenda is so important.

At the same time, the discussion revealed that in future, there should be less focus on introducing new international formats and processes and more attention paid to optimising and achieving better synergies and interfaces between existing formats. This is likely to be an important issue for the governments of relevant fragile and conflict-affected countries, as well as for civil society actors, as they attempt to capitalise on the added value generated by these international processes.

It furthermore became clear in the course of the debate, that the core prerequisite for tapping the existing potential for synergies requires important actors to invest political capital to overcome political divisions as well as lift this issue from a mere technicality to a political level. It was argued by some participants that political divisions between developed, developing and emerging countries about the appropriate form and forum to deal with peacebuilding and statebuilding continue to represent one of the major obstacles to make progress in this regard.

### Links & Literature

[Getting coherence and coordination right. Principles for the peacebuilding policy community](#)  
ACCORD Policy & Practice Brief 31 | 2014



Germany as a Country that has invested both in the Peacebuilding Architecture and the New Deal process might be in a suitable position to help overcome these entrenched divisions. Furthermore it was noted in the course of the discussion that early signals of possible openness by leading non-OECD countries to embrace elements of the New Deal compact concept for one country-specific process of the UN Peacebuilding Commission might signal a window of opportunity that should be seized in the coming months.