

The Women's Foreign Policy Group Presents

Ellen Margrethe Løj
Danish Ambassador to the UN, Co-Chair of the UN General
Assembly Working Committee on the Peacebuilding
Commission

New Approaches to Peace: The Peacebuilding Commission

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Inside the United Nations

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Dawn Calabia: We're very pleased to have with us, as you heard, one of the senior diplomats in the United Nations. Ellen Margrethe Løj has been in the Danish Foreign Service for over 32 years, and that reason and experience has put her on the hot seat right now as she's trying to develop a new Peacebuilding Commission for the United Nations. It's very tough to follow the elegance of Shashi. On the other hand, they're the people who make this place work, the people who build the United Nations up in member states, and we are extremely fortunate that we have the Ambassador with us this afternoon. She's going to talk a little bit about what you do and how you try to make things happen at the United Nations and we're extremely proud and pleased to introduce Ambassador Løj.

Ellen Løj: Thank you very much and thank you very much for inviting me. I'm not sure that if I had known that I would follow Shashi that I would have accepted. I cannot compete with his knowledge and elegance. Before I start on the subject of the Peacebuilding Commission, I would like to say to all my colleagues that are here from the Pacific that my heart goes out to them. I came back from New Zealand from a meeting with a Pacific Island States over the weekend. We discussed terrorism, because I'm chairing the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, and we discussed whether the threat of terrorism was real to them. I have to say with the news about an emerging Tsunami I can understand how they can have difficulties in fulfilling the requirements from my committee on reporting and so on. So, my heart really goes out for them and I hope that it will not be as bad as predicted.

Let me then turn to the Peacebuilding Commission. I must say that when I was asked to speak on that subject, I had almost forgotten what it was all about. I was heavily involved with the discussions of the General Assembly last autumn to follow up the Summit decision about the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. I had been asked by the president of the General Assembly to gather a colleague from Tanzania to co-chair the

negotiations. Right in the middle of December, we thought we had finished the job since the General Assembly adopted a resolution creating the Peacebuilding Commission. Certain difficulties have arisen since and I won't dwell on that, but my hope is and I think the hope of everybody is, that ... by the end of Monday next week we will have solved the rest of the issues so that the Peacebuilding Commission will still be established before the Human Rights Council.

Let me instead ask the question since there's no Peacebuilding Commission in the UN Charter, why do we now all of a sudden need a Peacebuilding Commission and what is, and what should be the role of the Peacebuilding Commission? What is peacekeeping as we have come to know it over the last 60 years and why is long-term development as executed by UNDP, UNICEF and all the development agencies of the UN not enough? There are two reasons in my view for the necessity of having a Peacebuilding Commission. One is that the conflicts that we see especially since the Cold War are not the conflicts we saw previously. Previously, conflicts were between states, and recent history shows us that most conflicts are within states. That means that government structure, even when peace has been established, is not present, is not there. There's no structure of a well-functioning state, and therefore yes you need peacekeeping in the traditional sense to make sure that fighting does not commence after the signing of a peace accord, but you certainly have to start right away building the structures for keeping the peace. The second argument is that when we look back at the various conflicts that the UN has been involved in, it shows as Shashi was alerting to that 50-60% of the conflicts reemerge after 5 years. That, I think, is an indication that the peace was made the peacekeepers did their job, but we left the conflict area before we had certainty of the peace being established. So therefore, the goal of the Peacebuilding Commission in my view is very simply to bring that percentage down so that conflicts do not reemerge. The proposal for a Peacebuilding Commission comes from the high-level panel. They proposed a Peacebuilding Commission to be an advisory body under the Security Council and their report in this field as in many other fields, led to intense discussions first in the corridors and after we had heard the Secretary General's report and he echoed the proposal about the Peacebuilding Commission in the UN as such.

I will not dwell on all the institutional discussions that we had, because the conclusions and the compromise reached towards the end of last year was that we should have a Peacebuilding Commission and that it should be advisory and it should be able to advise not only the Security Council but also the Economic and Social Council, which is a body in the General Assembly that deals with peace and development. I want to underline the word 'advise.' We have not, by the resolution of the Peacebuilding Commission, established yet another bureaucratic body, I hope. The meaning of the word 'advise' is simply that the intention was to have a group to follow the situation in individual countries on a continuous basis and only really advise either the Security Council or ECOSOC when things were going wrong. Their task, in my view, should be to cry wolf when we are not on the right course of practice.

Secondly, the aim of the Peacebuilding Commission was also to involve not only the UN actors and the member states of the UN but all the actors in this process including the

regional players, the regional organizations, the neighboring countries, and other international players like the international financial institutions, be it the African Development Bank or the World Bank and the IMF. The fact is that there is not a body anywhere where all the actors get together and coordinate their activities. What went wrong since the resolution was adopted and we were all very happy to establish a Peacebuilding Commission? How come it took us from September to December even to confirm what our leaders had said in the outcome document, namely that we should establish a Peacebuilding Commission and that it should be operating by the end of the year? Well, what went wrong was that we started a long argument in the UN on who should be serving on it. We were all fighting to get a place. The structure, as devised by its leaders, was that it should be one organizing committee, as small as possible, that should take the decision of which countries to deal with first and sort of direct the work. Then the real work should take place in what we call the country-specific format. We got bogged down in a discussion on who should be on the organizing committee. We thought we had solved it in December but it was not quite solved. Hopefully it will be solved on Monday and then the Peacebuilding Commission can start work. I want to underline here that if its focus will not, in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, be in the country-specific format, then we haven't achieved anything.

What should the country-specific format of the Peacebuilding Commission do? Let me give you as an example, Liberia. I do not know, because the organizing committee has not been formed and therefore I do not know which conflicts they will decide to start with, but maybe Liberia would be a country where that would be considered. I was in Liberia in the beginning...months in another capacity. It's very clear that it is a country emerging from conflict, it is a country that just held successful presidential and parliamentary elections, but otherwise a country that has to build its government structures and its society from scratch. What we are lacking in the international system is all the various actors being together around the table with a government. The government can make a plan, a development plan. I'm sure the president of Liberia is capable of doing this but she will need the cooperation of everybody, be it neighboring countries or donors from the international community, and she will need them to cooperate in a coordinated manner. She will need a forum to discuss where are we, are we on track, are we doing things on the right order or are you donors picking and choosing and jumping over some of the more unpleasant activities, because it is not "interesting enough" for your taxpayers to finance.

I'm always using the example when I'm talking about the Peacebuilding Commission that when I started working with the development commission in my own country in the early 70s, if anybody had turned to me and suggested that we should use good development money for training of police, I would have turned my back to them in disgust and said, "police- you must be kidding, they are wearing uniforms. It's very close to training of armies." Today international donors realize, and are more or less jumping over each other to finance police training in any conflict area. The only problem is that while we can all agree that it is important for a well-functioning society, especially one that is coming out of conflict, that they have policemen on the street and they have a well-functioning police force that protects human rights and so on and so forth. The policeman on the streets cannot do much if he does not have a legal system in the country to which the criminals in

the country can be referred to and tried. He cannot do much if he doesn't have a prison to keep the criminals in until justice has been passed. I just want to turn around in this room and ask how many donors are jumping over each other to finance the building and the funding of a prison. No, no, we'll say we prefer to do police training. That's my point: we need to sit down all together, and maybe we do not want to do it individually, then at least we can do it collectively.

So, my vision for the country-specific format is, on the one hand, to get a coordinated approach to what is needed. Secondly, to be a collective bad conscience for every body so that with a kind of mutual pressure we make sure that things are done in an orderly fashion, and thirdly, and not least, my vision about the country-specific format of the Peacebuilding Commission is that we keep countries institutions and agencies through their promises.

I don't know if any of you have heard about pledging conferences. Before I came to New York, I was working in the Davis Development Agency and I participated in pledging conferences all over the world, be it after a humanitarian catastrophe or be it in a peacebuilding situation. There was no limit to what we pledged, and the organizations — and I'm not blaming any of the organizations — that organized individual pledging the conferences, judged the success of the conferences by how much money was pledged. The problem is that nobody follows as to whether those pledges are ever realized. I used to say that nobody cared, I could have my mom's birthday and own phone number and everything [on the form], and nobody would check it. We have many examples of that.

Right now, we are focusing very much, both in the public and in the press but also in the Security Council on the possibility of a peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the rebels in Darfur. But don't forget that we do have a peace agreement between the north and the south of the Sudan. A peace agreement that was signed after nearly 20 years of fighting and the loss of close to 4 million people. Right after the signing of the peace agreement in 2004, a pledging conference was held, in Oslo, and everybody pledged generously, nobody has been keeping track of it and progress is very slow.

Attention is not given to it because problems are even bigger in Darfur, but I have to say that if we have any chance of solving anything in Darfur, we also have to make sure that conflict does not break out again between the north and the south. So, in my view, what the Peacebuilding Commission will do and what will be the real test of the Peacebuilding Commission will be this very practical work on a country-specific format. As I said, if that progresses in an orderly fashion and function, then there's no need for the Peacebuilding Commission to advise either the Security Council or the ECOSOC. It's only if development is about to go off track, then their responsibility will be to cry wolf. I have to say that I hope we will get started very quickly, I hope very quickly. I say that, although I have colleagues who have been active in the discussion present in the room, but I honestly hope that very soon we will be getting down to the real work, getting down to not forgetting that the purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission is to assist those women, children and men, living in a country emerging from a conflict, and not inter-institutional debate here in New York or a normal diplomatic game in New York about who is sitting

on what committee. There are some very real, practical challenges that have to be tackled at a country level and we do need a commission to coordinate and be a forum for that coordination.

Some may ask: have we coordinated well enough in the past? I have to tell you that I don't think that it has been well coordinated in the past. I gave the example of the pledging conferences with the whole international community, but I have (even though there are staff members from the UN present) even willing UN systems of coordination have not been well enough.

I remember when I came to New York five years ago, having headed the Davis Aid Agency for 5 years, I said to many colleagues in the system that one of the challenges was really to diminish the distance across First Avenue. Meaning between the political/peacekeeping people in the secretariat building and the development people across the street in the UNDP. In all fairness, I have to say that they have, over those five years, done a whole lot more communicating than they used to do and I remember in one of our meetings where we discussed the establishment of Peacebuilding Commission, and I will not reveal the name, but a UN colleague from the development field referred to a UN colleague from DPKO saying "two years ago, I didn't know who he was, and now I seem to meet him every week." I took that as a very positive sign of the distance across First Avenue being diminished. That is good and that is to be welcomed, but that's not enough because we also have the distance to the World Bank in Washington and the distance to the other institutional players and last but not least, the bilateral donors. The Peacebuilding Commission, in my view, is supposed to be something very practical, unpolitical, and very concentrated on the first phase of development: building the institutions. We also had a long discussion in the General Assembly, as to whether the Peacebuilding Commission could deal with a situation where the country in question had not requested their assistance. The problem in many of those conflict areas is that you do not have a sovereign government right after the peace has been established. One of the challenges in the first phase is to have an election and get a sovereign government then I think everybody agrees that it is a support structure for that being able to materialize that the Peacebuilding Commission is going to be dealing with. The sooner you have a sovereign government, the better. But they can take charge, they can take the lead and we can create the ownership that is so essential for achieving sustainable development.

Let me also, then, in conclusion add that another challenge for the Peacebuilding Commission will be to get out when the time is right. The Peacebuilding Commission is not supposed to supercede them and take over their work but is supposed to fill the very little gap — the gap being longer depending on the actual situation. Another example in that particular gap, which also convinced me of the necessity of having this Peacebuilding Commission, was at the time of Afghanistan and the changes in Afghanistan. You all remember, after the ousting of the Taliban regime, the enthusiasm about, for instance, about girls being allowed back in schools and the urgency of having schools reopen and textbooks and so on. I remember that we established the international community trust fund to finance many of these activities, and I remember the person responsible in UNDP, Julia Taft at the time, she was working very hard on it. Her problem was really, that

money had been pledged to the trust fund, but it took up to 6 years to have that money available for anything. It was easy for her to get somebody to finance textbooks, because it's very obvious that if you go to school, you need a textbook. That we can all understand and to tell our population. What was very difficult for her was to get money for the salaries for the teachers. The teachers in Afghanistan probably only earned less than \$50 a month, but it was difficult to convince them to come back to school and fulfill the pressures of those boys and girls going to school if you didn't have the teachers. So she had a six month period where she urgently needed cash for a lot of things that were not "attractive" for immediate financing and that's where we need the Peacebuilding Fund to help us over the gap. Thank you very much.

Patricia Ellis: You're going off to a meeting of the Security Council on Iran; can you talk to us at all, about what you see as the major challenges? And on peacebuilding, how do you decide which situations to take on.

Ambassador Løj: Well the last one is the easiest one, because the organizing committee will have to decide that and I'm sure we're going to have a fight about that. I think Denmark has been chosen by the Security Council to serve on the organizing committee until we leave the Council at the end of the year. One thing I will argue for is that we start with a limited number of conflicts here in the beginning, and not too complex conflicts because then I think we will be stumbling in the start. There's no conflict that is "simple," but we need to start on a small scale and get the experience and then build on that. On Iran, yes we're starting our first consultations in the Security Council after we had the report from Mr. ElBaradei this Friday. Of course, I'm not sure what will happen, but I'm sure that members of the Council will tell colleagues what their evaluation of the report is.

There's no doubt in my mind, and in the mind of my government, that the report is disappointing even though it's not surprising. Iran has not followed the appeal from the Security Council from the Presidential Statement at the end of March to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We still have not been able to get the IAEA to verify what is actually happening in Iran in relation to enrichment. I beg to differ about the comparison between Iran and Iraq. I know it's been done and I understand in the public mind it's easy to do so. The Iran situation is very different and unique compared with Iraq in the sense that first of all we have not been dealing with sanctions against the country for many years, whatsoever. We're actually dealing with a country who is a party to the treaty, who is not making any secret that they are enriching uranium. They are claiming that it is for peaceful purposes. The rest of the international community is saying 'if it is for peaceful purposes, let the international watchdog, the IAEA, come and see what goes on' and they are not letting them do that and I don't think the international community can sit silently by that happening. The potential of Iran getting nuclear weapons is horrendous to all of us and certainly to my country. I will, in the meeting this afternoon, say that the Security Council has to react after receiving this report and we'll see how this goes from there.

QUESTION: I'd be very interested in hearing your thoughts on the lessons that were learned over the crisis of the cartoons, the Danish cartoons, and the crisis that followed. What have we learned from that?

Ambassador Løj: Well, I think we have learned in Denmark that something that is published in the newspaper in the end of September all of a sudden becomes a hot international issue in the month of January. I think what we have learned from that, to be very short, is the importance of having dialogue among religions. Civilization has been underlined in a way we would have preferred to be without. I can tell you honestly, I think there's no way out of dialogue, because there are too many misunderstandings on all sides.

QUESTION: I very much appreciated your leadership on the Peacebuilding negotiations, and I'm talking on behalf of lots of women. We were very encouraged that I think, as far as I recall, that it was a first in terms of a letter being written by some 17 women foreign ministers to the head of the G8 encouraging that gender and women's needs be very much addressed by such a new body. That's going to be a challenge and I wanted to know in your position, how do you see that being operationalized. I think, having been here a long time, the issue of how you operationalize gender in a post-conflict situation is a challenge. How do you see both the support office and the Peacebuilding Commission making true on that goal?

Ambassador Løj: Well I think actually that certain projects and organizations, some people proposed that the organizing committee should be gender balanced to which I had to say that I was happy for that because then I was guaranteed a seat as long as I was P1 in New York. That was probably bringing it too far.

I think in a post-conflict situation, and in a peacebuilding situation in a country-specific format, and I really put the emphasis on 'country-specific,' you cannot succeed without the involvement of civil society. I do believe that the gender aspect will have to be involved through the civil society. There are pros and cons about having gender specific units. I was very famous in the foreign office in Denmark because I actually abolished the gender office. There was a big discussion about it. In some cases, a special gender unit works, but in other situations, it doesn't work. It becomes an excuse for mainstreaming the gender issue. There's no one size fits all with this important issue. I know luckily enough, from traveling a lot, in civil organizations in many conflict countries, the women's organizations are very strong and vocal and are sure to let their voices be heard and I think all of us from the international community should support them in speaking out.

QUESTION: Thank you for addressing us this afternoon. We've been talking about reform in the UN and refreshing the face of the UN and one of the most obvious ways is having more women in leadership positions within the UN not just on the ground and in peacekeeping operations, and not just at the SG level but at all levels. Frankly there are strong women leaders, such as yourself, in the UN but we need more, and we are a far cry from the 30% required by the Security Council resolution 1325. With Kofi Annan leaving, there will be somewhat of a 'changing of the guard' especially within the Security

Council. How can we, as organizations for women's leadership, ensure and hold the UN accountable that the promise of the 30% will be taken into consideration and what do you think are the best avenues and best levels for us to push for more women in the UN?

Ambassador Løj: I'm the wrong one to ask that question to. You should have asked that question to nearly any other of my female colleagues, because I think I represent one of the very few countries in the UN that has never operated with gender quotas in our own national system. That being said, we have succeeded very well in certain respects in many ministries and in the parliament and in the government, but we are doing pretty poorly in the foreign office I have to tell you. We're doing better, but we've been doing pretty poorly. You can say 'how come you've been doing so badly in Denmark?' we've been doing much worse than Norway, for instance, in the Foreign Office. One of the reasons why we are doing badly in the Danish foreign office is that this challenge in the whole gender discussion internationally about combining your professional career with your private life is very difficult in the diplomatic service where you move back and forth and your spouse has a career of their own. That's probably more prominent in a developed country like ours, than it might be in a society where the spouse or the wife may be used to leaving the active working life when having children. That being said, first of all yes, you are not fulfilling the target in the UN, but I have to give credit to the Secretary General.

There have been improvements during his time as Secretary General. I don't want to tell you, when I was here as a young secretary embassy and covered this issue in the 70s my goodness, when it was only men from general service who were promoted to key positions, so some progress has been made but more should be done. First of all, she should be very careful in the recruitment process. In the UN, it really is a question to have a base to recruit from. Then we women must show them that we are capable of lifting the task. We don't want it handed to us; we are prepared to work and do and we can show the men that we can do just as well as them.