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**CANADIAN POLICY ROUNDTABLE
ON PEACE-BUILDING:
SUSTAINING
POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION**

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REPORT

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Roundtable on Post-Conflict ReconstructionCANADIAN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON PEACE-BUILDING:
SUSTAINING POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTIONTABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION: SUSTAINING RECONSTRUCTION	2
SESSION I: DETERMINING PRIORITIES AND TIMELINES FOR INTERVENTION	4
SESSION II: GETTING THE SEQUENCING RIGHT	6
SESSION III: TARGETING ACTORS IN RECONSTRUCTION	9
SESSION IV: ENACTING RECONSTRUCTION	11
SESSION V: TOWARDS CANADA'S ROLE IN RECONSTRUCTION	13
ANNEX:	
List of participants to the Roundtable	15

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Executive Summary

This report presents the major priorities and policy responses discussed at a recent roundtable on Canada's role in supporting peace-building. Peace-building, or post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, is a unique phase in the life of societies emerging from internal strife, and demands context-specific policy initiatives. The central theme is the need for reconstruction to address the *basic human security needs* of war-torn societies in a *self-sustaining* manner. This entails donor support for local capacity-building, particularly at the level of civil society, which will secure the foundations for participatory structures of democratic governance. The importance of fostering self-reliance among local actors is stressed. To be both timely and effective, such support will be implemented during the window of opportunity which exists during negotiations to end a conflict and the associated cessation of armed hostilities. Cases such as Rwanda illustrate the need for peace-building initiatives to be implemented in an early and comprehensive way, such that political stability and social order is secured. Popular participation in a representative political process, credible law and order institutions, economic and social reconstruction, and protection of human rights are identified as priority areas in this regard. The sequence of phases in a peace process is presented in order to outline the appropriate timing of policy responses to these and other priorities. The implementation of such institutional responses in turn depends on greater collaboration and coordination among donor agencies, governments, and NGOs. Comparative advantages, division of responsibilities, and flexible strategic frameworks should be determined at the outset in order to maximise donor efficiency. While such policy and operational coordination among international actors is essential, it is also stressed that peace-building solutions cannot be imposed from the outside and must develop from the cooperative interaction of the local conflict actors. Sustainable peace-building will rest ultimately on local resources and initiatives. It is also argued that in the enacting of reconstruction, international commitments must be backed up with all the necessary resources to make them a success in practice. The report concludes with a survey of some suggestions for further research and action on how peace-building can be translated into effective, efficient, and sustainable policy initiatives.

INTRODUCTION: SUSTAINING RECONSTRUCTION

The growing international concern over the problems of responding to complex emergencies of internal conflict has encouraged study of the particular priorities for rebuilding war-torn societies. This issue area, of interest to policy-makers, non-governmental actors, and academics alike, is often referred to as *peace-building*. While the recent growth of analysis has produced a number of different definitions of "peace-building" (and even different terminology such as "peace development" and "civilian peacekeeping"), there is an emerging consensus on the goal of post-conflict reconstruction: reestablishing the institutional framework and supporting political culture for a self-sustaining, stable, and inclusionary democracy. There is also a widely perceived need for donor coordination in order to make reconstruction interventions timely and effective.

The objective of this roundtable consultation was to identify specific institutional responses that will support *sustainable reconstruction* at the local level. Thus the broad policy approach is to support local capacity-building for long-term reconstruction and stability, the foundation for effective peace-building. This sustainable foundations perspective differs from past approaches to rebuilding war-torn societies, which tended to focus on the institutions and structures of the state. It seeks to place policy initiatives at the level of the *basic human security needs* of local peoples and communities emerging from war.

Recent research on post-conflict reconstruction has also highlighted two important realities which analysts and policy-makers must keep in mind. The first is that it is neither useful nor correct to presume that conflicts are comparable from one case to another, as generic phenomena - they are highly *context-specific* and vary widely in their defining characteristics. Such considerations as origins, scope, final settlement, quality of leadership, role of external actors, geopolitical situation, and political system will all be very different from one case to another. It follows that the lessons learned from one case may not be applicable to another.

Having noted this need to be aware of contextual variation in conflict situations, it must be argued that reconstruction is a *distinct phase* in the life of societies, which requires a distinct set of analytical tools as well as appropriate policy responses. It cannot be understood as a broadening of humanitarian relief, nor as a gradual return to development work as usual. There is as much chance for a return to violence at this stage as there is for a firm advance towards peace.

This post-conflict reconstruction phase, the period in which a society begins to emerge from violent, internal (intra-state) conflict, is unique for one overarching reason: the violence was the result of a breakdown in established structures of governance. Common features which are characteristic of this type of conflict are:

- collapse or destruction of political order
- delegitimation of a wide range of social and political institutions
- political fragmentation and factionalisation of state and society
- disappearance of social cohesion and inter-group cooperation
- heavy militarization at institutional, societal, and cultural levels
- massive psychosocial trauma
- heavy damage to infrastructure, economy, and human resources

While it is necessary to understand post-conflict reconstruction as an inherently ongoing, long-term process, the Canadian policy interest in supporting *self-sustaining* local foundations means that our external initiatives will be short-term. Such policy initiatives will be implemented during the window of opportunity, typically from 24 to 36 months, that exists during negotiations to end a conflict and the associated cessation of hostilities. This time period allows for the establishment of preliminary community-based foundations which will sustain an effective and secure peace-building process once the international donor community has ended its external support. The challenge now is to take the accumulated research and analysis on peace-building and close the gap with the policy-making community, such that this knowledge is put into *effective policy practice*.

With this preliminary outline of the type of policy interventions envisaged, four basic priority areas for discussion were proposed: 1) determining priorities and timelines; 2) appropriate sequencing; 3) targeting actors in reconstruction; 4) implementing reconstruction. From these focused discussions, a clearer understanding of the Canadian resources for peace-building interventions was developed.

SESSION I: DETERMINING PRIORITIES AND TIMELINES FOR INTERVENTION

A) Perspectives From the Field

An important theme which must inform peace-building is the *faith* that the donor community must have in the peoples of war-torn societies. This translates into the need for policies to shift from a focus on the state to greater support for community-based peace-building. This is the level at which the "silent majority" must be encouraged to build their local capacities for long-term peace. While this reorientation is needed, and will involve greater cooperation with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), this does not preclude the continuing roles of the state, the donor community, and the rest of civil society. Donor policies should perhaps look to implementing *peace-building criteria* or even conditionalities that support local communities. Examples of this, in support of the *decentralised*, human security focus of peace-building, could involve: environmental sustainability, political participation, and equitable distribution. This implies a shift towards the "sharing" of sovereignty between the state and the people, between the central government and the regions.

The Rwandan conflict provides a case in which the response of the international community was wholly unsatisfactory. Assistance did not come in a *rapid* and *early* manner, which was essential. Aid promised was dispersed very slowly and was spent largely on refugee camps, where Hutu extremists are very active. More aid should have been focused on building local capacities for peace within Rwanda itself, and to assist the RPF government in establishing *internal stability*. There is also the problem of external NGOs not cooperating with the government, and that attitude must be changed. NGOs have an obligation to work with local authorities to evolve responsible and effective government initiatives. Rwanda also reveals the priority of implementing *justice* in cases of war crimes; people expect this as a prerequisite for reconciliation.

Discussion of other cases such as El Salvador and Bosnia focused on the priorities of *political stability* and *social order*, which must be seen as pillars supporting a true peace. If people continue to feel threatened and insecure at the local, community level, this will undermine their faith in the "peace" proclaimed by authorities. Crime and banditry often play a large role in this problem of post-war instability. This too points to the need for new political structures to be based on the firm foundation of a *reconstituted civil society* engaged in *active participation in governance*. Inter-ethnic tolerance and respect for pluralism are important here, as is the need for a strong judiciary that will pursue cases of human rights violations and abuse of power.

B) Prioritising Human Security Needs

Conflict breaks out in societies where development has not focused successfully on basic human needs, where state institutions are often corrupt and inefficient. In many cases even the notion of "reconstruction" may be a misnomer, as what is required is the building of a new civil society from the ground up. Support of the people is crucial, and their expectations must be heard and addressed, particularly as these relate to recognition and participation needs. Channels for the articulation of *popular participation* are therefore very important, so that there is a general perception of alternatives to frustration and violence. This absence of alternatives and the potential for violence is particularly evident in postcolonial countries in which state centralisation of power is "over-developed", relative to the role of civil society and grassroots movements. As a consequence, root problems such as absence of accountability and representation, land alienation, refugee migration, and elite domination persist and worsen over a period of decades.

Peace-building is a window of opportunity to make peace self-sustaining. What people need for this to work, in addition to opportunities for participation, is a sense of *security*. Even in the aftermath of conflict, concerns persist at the societal level about violent crime, education for children, and employment. Such basic needs are familiar to Canadians, and this gives us a potential to provide effective assistance. In terms of the shape of such external assistance, the policies should be *technical* and oriented toward *institutional capacity-building*.

At the *state* level, this includes support for an accessible and unbiased judiciary, professional police, and non-corrupt bureaucracy. These are areas of technical expertise for Canada. At the level of *civil society*, local NGOs which were present during the conflict need to be engaged in the process of promoting democratic participation at the popular level. Donor policies should make use of this local NGO expertise for the promotion of a democratic political culture. For example, a human rights group can expand its activities to civic education on rights and democracy. The integration of these two levels is what will ensure sustainable *representative political institutions*. Government accountability will have to rest on the presence of credible *alternatives* (such as broad-based political parties, labour unions) and the *ability* of the people to support these.

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:

negotiation, cessation of hostilities, transition, and consolidation. There is a particular need for political/diplomatic actors to be involved for longer periods of time, as the development agencies are. One to two years is not a sufficient period of time for complex political restructuring to take root. The bulk of external assistance should take place during the transition phase (diplomatic, military, financial, legal, and technical), but planning and coordination must be initiated earlier, while *negotiations* are in progress. At this stage it is also important for donors to develop a cooperative relationship with the conflict actors so as to facilitate meaningful planning. Some initial activities can also be implemented during the *cessation of hostilities*, such as refugee repatriation (where possible), demining, and demobilisation of combatants. During the *transition phase*, important reconstruction activities (adjusted as the specific context requires) could include the following:

- provision of internal civilian security: disarm combatants, end impunity, and restructure police/security forces for civilian control
- strengthen civil society so that it can participate in and contribute to an effective, inclusive political process
- strengthen government's capacity to function at key levels: legislature, public administration, judiciary, and regional governments
- ensure access to basic survival needs: food, water, health care, shelter
- support community-based reconciliation and confidence building: functional cooperation on projects to rebuild social and economic infrastructure
- institutionalise protection and promotion of human rights, and develop mechanisms for punishing those guilty of past atrocities
- assist the return of refugees and internally-displaced persons, including ex-combatants
- promote rural and urban economic revitalisation: focus on job-creation and support for the rejuvenation of household economies and the smallholder agricultural sector

For these peace-building activities to meet their objectives, another important consideration is the *interaction of local and international actors*. Local actors must be

involved at all levels in reconstruction efforts. Government institutions, even if ineffectual, must be engaged, as well as militant opposition groups. Civil society does not yet receive the attention it needs during a peace-building process (it must be involved at the project level, both in design as well as implementation). At the international level, a wide variety of organizations and agencies should be involved in the peace process. The example of CIDA's funding for projects implemented by RCMP was cited in this regard. Finally, *donor coordination and collaboration* must be seen as a priority for peace-building activities to be organized for maximum efficiency and effect.

Institutional impediments here are considerable, and will require special efforts to surmount. A *working group of donors* contributing to a peace process should be formed during the negotiation phase in order to develop a *flexible framework* for action and a *division of responsibilities*. A lead donor organization should be identified to head the working group. Where possible, this working group should forge contacts with the government and opposition groups engaged in negotiations. While the UN resident coordinator could act as the lead, some suggested it would be preferable for the World Bank to play this role of coordinating donor initiatives. It was argued that there is no other viable multilateral agency to act in such capacity, and that the World Bank already does perform some aspects of this (such as its management of the Palestine trust fund). Sectoral working groups could also be established to minimize overlap between external donor agencies, and to ensure a code of conduct for NGO activity. Some participants questioned this proposed role for the World Bank, however, noting that the mandate of the Bank prevents it from engaging in "political" activities. But others suggested that it was appropriate for the Bank to evolve to meet the challenges of these new situations, and that member governments could provide some guidance on managing these potential political complications of reconstruction.

In the consideration of these priorities for action and coordination, some participants observed that there can be an incongruence between the reconstruction agenda and the agendas of various *political* actors. Thus our approach needs to be pragmatic as well, helping people at the local level to solve problems and *prevent* a return to violence. This preventive aspect of peace-building is needed in order to stop the cycle of violence. In this regard, it was also noted that what may be needed is a *deconstruction* of conflict-producing practices as much as the (re)construction of a viable political order. To the extent that Canadian foreign aid/trade policies may in fact reinforce such negative conflict-producing elements, adjusting such policies (to take human rights into account, for example) may in fact be necessary for preventive peace-building. It was also noted that there remains significant resistance in donor countries, including Canada, to support for direct funding to be disbursed and controlled by local actors.

A number of conceptual clarifications were also raised. Some participants argued that greater clarity of purpose was needed regarding what donors ultimately wished to accomplish with post-conflict peace-building. A clear sense of objectives and realistic expectations was deemed necessary to guide policy, and to avoid the political tensions arising from the difference between the expectations of the war-torn societies and what is actually "deliverable" on the part of the international donor community.

SESSION III: TARGETING ACTORS IN RECONSTRUCTION

While conceptual analysis of post-war reconstruction has advanced considerably, the translation of this into effective *policy* and *operational coordination* lags behind, and is in fact much more difficult. To date, progress in these areas has been ad hoc and at the field level. What is required are fundamental reforms on the part of the donor agencies themselves, so that the unique demands of peace-building may be effectively addressed. Such institutional change is one of the most difficult things to accomplish. It must involve exceptionally dedicated and *skilled personnel*, *flexibility* in responding to new and risky situations, and *autonomy* for personnel in the field. The ICRC is one example of an organization that has been very successful in this regard.

One important factor that makes peace-building particularly unique at the policy level is the *highly-politicized environment* of conflicts. This aspect is perhaps the central reason why context is so important for policy-makers to consider. Post-war reconstruction must ultimately be directed towards a real political solution: a sustainable power-sharing and dispute resolution arrangement engaging all the relevant conflict actors. A related problem is that a substantial amount of donor assistance is linked with political considerations, and policy responses will have to be sensitive to the need for effective external reconstruction aid in such an overtly politicised local environment.

Peace-building activities are thus ultimately concerned with political development as an issue of human security, in an environment where there is little or no government legitimacy. Four major challenges may be proposed in this regard:

- 1) To *consolidate peace* by transforming conflict into a sustainable political settlement and the demilitarisation of society. This entails moving war-torn societies from conflict-habituated systems to peaceful systems.
- 2) To *increase humanitarian aid* after the end of a conflict, because people are on the move in large numbers. Conflict actors motivate these movements of their political constituencies so that the conflict can proceed at the level of politics and votes.

- 3) To *rebuild political and economic infrastructures*, as well as civil society/ social institutions. This can involve identifying and working with local peace groups.
- 4) To *effect long-term reconciliation* that deals with the collective traumas of war, these being potential seeds for future violent conflict.

All these challenges are interlinked and must be approached simultaneously. Complex interactions are involved, and our understanding in this regard is deficient. For example, aid projects which target only one side of a conflict may thereby favour that actor and complicate the prospects for a sustainable peace.

This means that peace-building must be pursued along different sectoral "tracks", as well as at the levels of society, state/government, and international/global interventions. The pressing need is to come up with an overall *strategic framework* with minimum contradictions. One suggestion in this regard was to form working groups for sectors such as health, education, and humanitarian relief, which can produce practical guidelines for peace-building, liaise with local contact organisations, and share information and evaluation.

At the level of coordinating the international actors, there is a need for *strategic policy integration*. This will require a different approach for each case. *Consultations* at the highest level for the donor actors will be needed in order to formulate a cooperative mechanism for assistance and to determine comparative advantage. This will lead to a coordinated policy response - a more integrated approach that is translated into an operational reality. This is a priority area in the work of the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). Canada can also play a considerable role in this area as a major actor in international development with no legacy of great power political domination. We have an almost unique potential to promote a progressive policy approach, given that the like-minded European actors (such as Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Ireland) are increasingly bound by common EU policies. It was also argued that there are potential opportunities for collaborative initiatives to be pursued with such like-minded European partners.

Finally, the *balance* between the interaction of external (donor) actors and internal (conflict) actors is not right. Solutions cannot be imposed from outside but rather must be developed from the cooperative interaction of the local conflict actors and their society. Yet external assistance is still selective and politicised, and fails to build on local resources and dynamics. So there is a need to "map" local actors and their dynamic interaction. 80% of reconstruction is done by local people at the local level, and based

on local initiatives. Technically-perfect solutions devised by outside actors will only serve to work against these local advances.

SESSION IV: ENACTING RECONSTRUCTION

The difficulties and challenges posed by the need to close the gap between analysis and timely policy responses were illustrated once again with reference to the recent case of Rwanda. This was a clear case of policy failure on the part of the international community. The window of opportunity which existed after the signing of the Arusha Accords and before President Habyarimana's plane was shot down (from 4 August 1993 to 5 April 1994), was lost due to a combination of inadequate resources and international inaction. The lack of coordination between government agencies, and between governments and the UN was cited as a particular problem that persists to this day.

Although the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) initiated and brokered the peace process, it was later sidelined by the intervention of the UN. The politics of the international community, rather than the local need for human security, became the determining factor in the UN response. Once large-scale violence began to break out again, the lack of coordination among the different levels of decision-making meant that the little external aid provided arrived *after* the genocide had taken place. In short, intelligence collected at the field level (by UNAMIR among others) was not acted upon, and there was no clear mandate for a coordinated response.

This case demonstrates that for post-conflict reconstruction to be successful, the international donor community must take the responsibility to do what is called for (in this case by the conflict actors themselves) when this assistance is needed. An *integrated and effective response* based on *informed analysis* is the key. The window of opportunity, during which conflict actors are committed to implementing a negotiated peace agreement and evolving a democratic political system, is too brief for time to be lost due to lack of coordination. In Rwanda, the parties to the Arusha Accords lobbied the UN together for a stronger UN force to secure internal stability and ensure civilian security. Instead, UNAMIR was pulled out when it faced the serious threat of organised internal violence, the very problem it was intended to deter. Such errors in the enacting of peace-building led one participant to suggest that such multilateral action cannot be successfully pursued through the UN. However, it was also noted that the UN role in supporting peace in Haiti has been considerably more positive and effective.

While the donor community must be careful not to create great expectations of massive international intervention in every case, it must also follow through on the promises which are made. This may mean difficult choices when faced with committing resources in a situation of potential political collapse, but the choices made should be backed fully with the necessary action. From a Canadian perspective, it may be preferable to propose peace-building interventions at a direct bilateral level, where Canada's interests and values (such as the concern for making such activities sustainable) can be articulated in clear negotiations. By asking what people need for human security at the local level, policy responses may be framed in the manner of a contractual obligation. The challenge remains to enact reconstruction commitments in an effective, efficient, and sustainable manner.

SESSION V: TOWARDS CANADA'S ROLE IN RECONSTRUCTION

The complexities of responding to societies devastated by internal war are daunting. The destruction of development and human capital in these conflicts results in a profound crisis of governance and political legitimacy. One way of thinking about this problem is to imagine internal war as a bonfire - the "kindling" is all of the development concerns such as scarce resources, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, and so on; the "gasoline" is the tensions which exist between different communal groups in society; and the "match" is irresponsible political action by elites. In the aftermath of war, all of these factors must be prevented from recombining.

Yet donor agencies tend to work only on the development "kindling" because it is relatively easy and value-neutral. But such conflicts require a response which is focused more on the "gasoline": reducing inter-group tensions in society by building capacities for free media, protection of human rights, an inclusive political process, and the maintenance of law and order. Canadian foreign policy now puts a priority focus on the provision of basic human needs, including the need for security, and the policy aim is to make such interventions sustainable over the long term. Policy-makers are in need of studies of societies which have managed to build a sustainable peace without substantial external assistance. There is perhaps much to learn from these local initiatives taken in countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Lebanon, Eritrea, and Namibia.

The setting of priorities also continues to be a dilemma for Canadian action to support peace-building. One notable area of concern is how to balance such reconstruction assistance with the promotion of human rights. Many of these post-conflict countries have serious human rights problems, and support for rebuilding state institutions that may be guilty of such violations (such as the security forces) can appear contradictory. One answer is give aid to support the government but also help to establish a local human rights monitoring capability, as has been done in Bosnia and Rwanda. Military expenditures are another area of concern when seeking to strike a balance in policy support for such reconstruction activities. But the overarching concern in engaging with this emerging global issue of post-war peace-building is to restore popular confidence at the local, community level in the political system. This must be done with policies that are comprehensive and holistic in scope, that approach support for internal peace and stability as a continuum from prevention to post-war reconstruction.

It was noted by some participants that in an era of declining resources for foreign aid, donor agencies have to be smarter about the allocation of what remains. This means a greater awareness of available Canadian expertise, and more communication and cooperation between government and NGOs. One approach would be to explore such

inter-actor coordination in selected pilot peace-building projects, the results of which could then be evaluated. Another suggestion was to conduct a comprehensive study of the resources that Canada can contribute to post-conflict reconstruction. Reference was made to the existing Peace-building Contact Group as an example of such collaboration between government, NGOs, and the academic community.

It was also suggested that Canada could work in cooperation with other like-minded countries. The establishing of country-specific task forces (similar to that created to address the South Africa situation) was proposed as a potentially useful way to involve parliamentarians and build political and public support for Canadian peace-building initiatives. Further systematic policy research in these areas was recommended, as was the institutionalisation of a regular process of consultation with such researchers and academics. It was also suggested that Canada could increase its participation in the UNRISD War-Torn Societies Project.

The issue of limited resources also works in favour of policy responses which promote local capacity-building and sustainability. Current Canadian projects to promote conflict prevention in Africa are based on this approach, such as our support for OAU and Francophonie roundtables on regional security issues, and for roundtables in Burundi to engage local media figures, parliamentarians, and the military. Such projects are intended to build a long-term peace that is both preventive and sustainable.

ROUNDTABLE ON POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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