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**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS AT THE PBF HIGH-LEVEL
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING**

New York, 29 November 2012

Ambassador Knutsson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2012 Peacebuilding Fund High-Level Stakeholders Meeting. I am pleased that we have the opportunity today to review the activities and achievements of the Peacebuilding Fund over the past year and to underscore the continuous progress we are making.

This morning, we will first hear from Ambassador Knutsson, chair of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group on the Peacebuilding Fund, and then have a few initial interventions from the floor. When the Secretary-General then joins us later this morning, we will take a break from the regular speakers list to hear from him. Following the Secretary-General, we are pleased to have with us his special adviser on Yemen, Jamal Benomar, and our guest of honour, Yemeni activist and Nobel peace prize laureate, Tawakkul Karman, who will join by video conference to deliver a keynote address. Ms Karman and Mr Benomar will share with us some insights into the peacebuilding challenges in Yemen – and to the critical role the PBF has played and will continue to play in the transition there.

First, however, allow me to make some general remarks.

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Excellencies,

When I first came to PBSO a few years ago, we decided that the Peacebuilding Fund needed to have a clear and distinct identity to establish itself and gain the trust of stakeholders. To be honest, that was not too difficult as there was such a dearth of funds dedicated to transition contexts. But we also wanted to distinguish the Fund as fast, catalytic and relevant, that is, taking risks and filling gaps. I am pleased to say that the past year has highlighted again that the PBF is meeting this aspiration and that this is increasingly acknowledged by stakeholders.

In January, Yemen counted on the Fund's quickness to support the transition election within the tightest of deadlines set by the political agreement. We provided \$1 million in time to cover a critical gap. In Libya, we provided support for civic and women's education ahead of the country's historic elections in July this year.

In Guinea, our funding in the security sector is showing promise of being catalytic. With advocacy and support of the Peacebuilding Commission, the PBF has supported a military retirement programme led by President Condé's office. This reduced the number of men in uniform by 15% and, perhaps more importantly, signaled a commitment to civilian management of the armed forces. Just recently, the European Union announced a significant medium-term programme in SSR. This is exactly how we had intended for this to work – the PBF would help the UN get started quickly and play a bridging role, while others design and put in place longer-term actions. and

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By being ‘relevant,’ we mean that the PBF takes risks and fills gaps, always mindful of the given context. In Myanmar, for example, we are working closely with the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser, the Resident Coordinator, and organizations like the ILO and plan to provide critical gap-filling support for the Myanmar Peace Centre. Again in collaboration with complementary funding from the European Union, the PBF will be helping to build the capacity of the Government’s own initiative to manage a very complex peace process.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In all our endeavours, we work closely with UN leaders on the ground, drawing in the PBC for the countries on its agenda, and bringing together the entire UN system. Partnership – between Government, national civic leaders and international development actors – is the key to ensuring peacebuilding outcomes, accountability, and national ownership alike. The PBF promotes such partnership through Joint Steering Committees. These are far from perfect but they are a means of enhancing national ownership and the peacebuilding relevance of programmes.

National ownership goes hand in hand with government commitment to building sustainable peace – and appreciation of the wide array of issues and challenges to be addressed in this context. The “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States” and the work of the g7+ countries are a commendable initiative in this regard to highlight the areas to be addressed. While the New Deal has, in some forums at least, been controversial, for us, it is actually a useful framework that can help measure government commitment to and progress in peacebuilding.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

That we are overall on the right track is, I believe, reflected both in the strong interest of Governments in receiving PBF assistance and in the continued support of our donors:

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In recent months, the Presidents of Somalia, Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan have all approached the Secretary-General with specific requests for PBF support.

Our donors, too, continue to rate us highly. Multilateral aid reviews assess the Fund as “strong.” A major Australian multilateral aid review earlier this year has led to a new multi-year commitment, while the UK’s annual performance review gave the PBF a good grade yet again.

As we will hear more today, there are a number of other multi-year commitments in the works.

Taken together, we project that the PBF will receive approximately \$75 million in 2012. And perhaps more importantly, we can *already* foresee at least \$60 million for 2013 and 2014. This income predictability, especially at a time of global austerity, speaks to the belief in the value of pooled funding for peacebuilding. Predictability also allows for quality programming.

We are deeply grateful to all our donors for their support. Their commitment and interest will have brought nearly half a billion dollars into the Fund over the six years since its inception. And although our top ten donors provide 87% of all contributions, we are particularly proud that with a total of 52 donors, the PBF has one of the most diverse donor bases of all UN trust funds.

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completely in-step in the process of prioritization. That is why we place emphasis on early programming support.

And we are building partnerships with the larger development funding streams, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, using our comparative advantage of being fast and risk-taking to pilot or initiate programmes that they may scale up later.

We will also conduct a comprehensive review of the PBF next year.

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Sierra Leone's third peaceful and transparent election since the civil war, less than two weeks ago, equally underscores the evolution that country has undergone since 2006, with the sustained support of many in the international community, including the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Both countries can be proud of their achievements, which open up a path for them to move from peacebuilding to longer-term development.

As our strategy for 2012/2013 also highlights, not least in response to the 2010 Review of the peacebuilding architecture, communication is quintessential. We have been working to revamp our website, and you also have before you PBSO's first annual report, which represents the key reference document for this meeting.

The 2012 report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict – emphasising the need for inclusive approaches to peacebuilding, institution-building, and sustained support and mutual accountability – should also help foster a common understanding of peacebuilding, its most important ingredients, and the challenges and dilemmas that persist.

But we must also remain firmly focused on what we are trying to achieve on the ground in terms of helping build sustainable peace. Your continued support will enable us to achieve this goal.

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