

Panel Executive Brief:
Multilateral Donors Response to Fragility & Conflict Prevention

Stabilization cannot be a unilateral or bilateral effort. It requires the engagement of partner nations, the private sector, international and regional organizations, as well as national and local actors that are subjected to stabilization. The timing of such engagement is a key consideration. The international community has long prioritized the funding of stabilization in already fragile nations; yet, the SAR embodies a growing recognition of preventive approaches to conflict. We need to assess risks, form probabilistic models, and engage multilateral partners early on.

The UN, in particular, is a legitimate strategic partner that struggles to articulate stabilization as different from peacekeeping, to provide resources for peace operations, and to reform itself as an institution. Beyond these limitations, the UN continues to be a key partner in stabilization operations.

Speakers

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Key Issues/Problems discussed:

- A change in nature and intensity of violence calls for a change in our approach to it.
- Communities with weak political and economic systems face additional pressures of conflict, including accommodating refugees and are often unable to manage these pressures.
- Development is related to peace, but there are concerns surrounding whether humanitarian funds should be diverted to security.
- Transitions within the UN have affected the way it operates in stabilization efforts. The election of UN-skeptic Donald Trump, consequent budget cuts, and tensions within the Security Council inhibit its ability to manage conflicts worldwide.
- There is no UN definition of stabilization. Peacekeeping does not “stabilize” places where there is no peace to keep and, instead, amounts to “babysitting”; countries consent to peacekeeping forces to essentially support *one* side against its opponents.
- The Peacebuilding Support Office has been starved of resources.

Key Recommendations:

- Within the developmental approach to stabilization, we need to move beyond poverty eradication and economic development and address *inequality*.
- Preventive and systemic approaches that include development and human rights are needed in addition to reactive operational approaches.
- There is a need to bring together different partners, including private sector actors like Amazon and Microsoft, to collect and analyze data about risk and form probabilistic models.
- We need to support the local and national ownership of conflict-preventing development and work closely with municipal and district councils. We should also consider faith organizations.
- We need better and more effective financing mechanisms.
- The US should work with the UN. The UN is a strategic, not operational, partner with its own legitimacy that the US cannot replicate.

- The US should work with regional organizations like AU, Arab League, and OAS.
- Preventive diplomacy is a great investment and needs to be funded. It doesn't cost much and has averted crises in places like Burkina Faso, Gambia, and Malawi.
- New technologies should be utilized in order to innovate peacebuilding.

Significance of SAR:

There was a time when organizations like UNDP and the World Bank would refuse to engage with the political aspects of stabilization; the SAR is significant for doing precisely this. It further emphasizes the importance of timely engagements of the US with international actors and organizations to facilitate a cost-effective and preventive approach.