Pursuing sustainable peace through post-conflict peacebuilding: The case of Sierra Leone

Theo Neethling⋆

Many of the world's poorest states have experienced violent conflict in the past decades and it is today widely accepted that armed conflicts require sustained efforts that address not only the military, but also the political, humanitarian, economic and social dimensions of conflicts. For some years there has been a growing international concern with and emphasis on peacebuilding programming in the area of conflict resolution and peacekeeping. In Sierra Leone, a country that was engulfed in a brutal civil war for more than ten years, peace was hard won – a peace that would not have been possible without the presence and active post-conflict assistance of the United Nations (UN). However, Sierra Leone remains in a precarious state, being one of the poorest countries in the world, and needs the commitment of the international community in ongoing post-conflict peacebuilding to sustain its delicate peace. This article examines the challenges, extent and achievements of peacebuilding programming in Sierra Leone, and assesses the prospects for sustainable peace in this once war-torn West African state.

⋆ Theo Neethling is a professor of political science in the Faculty of Military Science (Military Academy), Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Introduction

Following the deployment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1997 and the United Nations Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) in 1998, the United Nations (UN) deployed the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)[1] in 1999 in the wake of the devastating civil war in that country, which left 75 000 people dead and many more maimed. The conflict in Sierra Leone shocked the international community with its images of drugged-up youngsters severing the arms, legs and body parts of civilians. Television journalists capturing the presence of vultures in the capital Freetown, ready to scavenge on dead human flesh, further imposed the brutality of the war on international observers and outsiders. Some six years later, in November 2005, UNAMSIL hosted an International Music Festival to mark what has been described as 'the end of the successful UN mission in West Africa', which brought peace and stability to a country that had been engulfed in one of the most brutal wars in the international community in the past decade (Bell 2005:1). Indeed, peace in Sierra Leone was hard won and is perceived by some as a success story for the UN peacekeeping system.

The importance of Sierra Leone to the UN is evident from the fact that in 2004 some 13 000 UN peacekeepers were deployed in Sierra Leone, which has a population of 5,7 million, while only about 10 000 peacekeepers were deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with a population ten times as large (Ottoway et al 2004:1) and several times larger in territorial expanse. For some observers UNAMSIL signalled the 'UN's return to Africa' after the major (Western) powers 'retreated' from African peacekeeping after the twin failures of Somalia and Rwanda in the early 1990s. The mission's achievements have been numerous and it shepherded the peace process to regularise much of the once war-ravaged country's diamond mining industry which had fuelled the conflict (Bell 2005:1–2).

On 12 October 2006, Solomon Berewa, Vice-President of Sierra Leone, stated in an address to the UN Peacebuilding Commission in New York that 'there is now peace in the country, democratic elections have already been held with success, and all that the country should now do is to get on with the normal business of development' (Berewa 2006).However, he also cautioned that 'our success as a viable state, pursuing development that is sustainable, is in jeopardy unless we can tackle immediately, certain obstacles in our path which, if not removed, may hinder our progress towards long term peace and stability' (Berewa 2006). In fact, he alluded to certain areas that are often ignored, areas that constitute impediments to Sierra Leone's development agenda and that may threaten peace and stability in the country. It is alarming that Sierra Leone remains one of the world's poorest countries with about 70 per cent of its population still subsisting on less than a dollar a day, whilst 70 per cent remain illiterate (Bell 2005:2).

Of further relevance is that extensive research undertaken over a considerable period suggests that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first five years of their conclusion. This can often be blamed on the protagonists in conflicts, because they frequently agree to peace agreements for tactical reasons without being firmly committed to a long-term peace process (De Coning 2004:42). Therefore, for some years there have been a growing concern with and emphasis on the necessity of linking security and development to achieve meaningful and sustainable peace, and pursuing this by means of special peacebuilding measures.

In view of the above, this article examines the challenges, extent and achievements of post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, and assesses the prospects for sustainable peace in this once war-torn West African state.

Conceptualising peacebuilding

Through *An agenda for peace,* introduced in 1992 by the then UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the concept of peacebuilding gained widespread acceptance in academic and political circles. According to the Secretary-General, peacebuilding consisted of 'sustained, co-operative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems' (UN Secretary-General 1992). However, Haugerudbraaten (1998:1) argues that the measures listed in *An agenda for peace*, namely disarming, restoring order, destroying weapons, repatriating refugees, training security forces, monitoring elections, advancing the protection of human rights, reforming institutions and promoting political participation, do not carry the notion of being sustained efforts that address the underlying or root causes of conflicts. A host of other questions and issues were also raised as a matter of discourse and ongoing discussion on peacebuilding as a notion.

After considerable debate and disagreement on the exact meaning of peacebuilding, the Secretary-General modified his position in the 1995 *Supplement to an agenda for peace* and suggested that peacebuilding could also be preventive (UN Secretary-General 1995). This coincides with a somewhat broader view that peacebuilding is essentially about removing or weakening factors that breed or sustain conflict, and reinforcing factors that build positive relations and sustain peace (Hitchcock 2004:38). Hence it could be stated that peacebuilding has evolved from a strictly post-conflict undertaking to a concept with a broader meaning, and the general consensus would seem that peacebuilding efforts should (ideally speaking) already be attempted during the earliest indication of tension in a situation of potential conflict. Against this background, Tschirgi (2003:1) points out that the term 'peacebuilding' was gradually expanded to refer to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle. As far as this article is concerned, the view is taken that the purpose of peacebuilding is to avoid a return to conflict and that in some cases it may require ambitious long-term nation-building efforts by international actors.

The challenge for the UN – as the pre-eminent organisation responsible for international peace and security – was how to transform the short-term presence of peacekeepers into efforts aimed at societal transformation. Efforts aimed at building peace, as opposed to providing security, brought security thinking and practice into closer alignment with development policy (Sending 2004:5). From an international or macro perspective, the elaborate doctrines, strategies and institutions developed during the Cold War to deal with issues of international peace and security were inadequate for dealing with conflicts in the 'new' era (Tschirgi 2003:1).

Against this background, a range of international reforms throughout the international system have taken place to facilitate peacebuilding endeavours. There were numerous proposals for a fundamental overhaul of the UN system, *inter alia* by the 2000 Report of the Panel of UN Peacekeeping Operations (otherwise known as the Brahimi Report). Furthermore, major aid agencies established conflict prevention and peacebuilding units (Tschirgi 2003:4–5). Today, a great deal of attention is focused on the need for more and better coordination among existing bureaucratic organisations, such as the UN's Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), or between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF), on the one hand, and the DPA and DPKO, on the other. By its own account, the UNDP's work is now central to post-conflict peacebuilding. Areas in the nexus of peace and security where, for instance, the UNDP is most active are the demobilisation of former combatants, comprehensive mine action, sustainable return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the restoration of governance institutions to support the rule of law and bringing about just and democratic societies (UNDP 2004:12). This implies that the UNDP, as the UN's global development network that is facilitating and advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life and eradicate poverty (UNDP 2007a:1), realised the importance of addressing the proximate and root causes of contemporary conflicts. In a post-conflict context, this means the consolidation and promotion of peace and the building of trust in the aftermath of a conflict to prevent a relapse into conflict or war.

In sum, lying at the nexus of development and security, peacebuilding requires a readiness to make a difference on the ground in preventing conflicts or establishing the conditions for a return to sustainable peace. It also relates to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle.

The question arises as to what confronts the peacebuilding agenda on the African continent. Furthermore, to what extent have peacebuilding endeavours been undertaken in conflict-ridden African states? These questions will be explored in the section below with specific reference to post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.

The peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone[2]

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) undertook various initiatives aimed at a peaceful settlement in Sierra Leone – including the deployment of peacekeepers in 1997. Initially, this was done with a view to reinstating a democratically elected government in Freetown, which had been toppled in May 1997. In June 1998, the UN Security Council decided to establish the United Nations Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for an initial period of six months. The mission had the task of monitoring and facilitating efforts to disarm the combatants and restructure Sierra Leone's security forces. Unarmed UN teams under the protection of ECOMOG documented reports of ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses (UNDPKO 2001a:1). But UNOMSIL was never more than a 'lame duck' UN presence alongside ECOMOG and no meaningful progress could be made towards the UNOMSIL mandate in a highly unstable security environment. In these circumstances, the rebels began a second offensive to retake Freetown and managed to overrun most of the city towards the end of 1998. Once more this resulted in a toppling of a civilian government in Freetown. ECOMOG struck back and again installed a civilian government, although thousands of rebels were reportedly still hiding out in the countryside. The UN Security Council commended ECOMOG on its role in supporting the restoration of peace and security in Sierra Leone. However, ECOMOG was unable to stamp its authority on the hinterland beyond Freetown and rebels continued to terrorise and brutalise the population (Malan 2000:5–6).

On 22 October 1999, the Security Council decided to terminate UNOMSIL and to establish UNAMSIL, a much larger mission with a maximum strength of 6 000 military personnel, including 260 military observers. UNAMSIL was given the task of assisting the government and rebels in carrying out the provisions of the Lomé agreement (UNDPKO 2001a:2). According to a UN Security Council Resolution of February 2000 (a revised version of Resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999) UNAMSIL was given the following mandate (UNDPKO 2001b:1):

■ To provide security at key locations and government buildings, particularly in Freetown, important intersections and major airports

■ To facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares

■ To provide security in and at all sites of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes

■ To co-ordinate with and assist the Sierra Leone law enforcement authorities in the discharge of their responsibilities

■ To safeguard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and to assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction

In accordance with its mandate, UNAMSIL was given the task of helping to disarm an estimated 45 000 former combatants. This was a mammoth task since only 6 000 troops were deployed into the theatre, although 11 000 troops were mandated by the Security Council on 7 February 2000. By May 2000 it was reported that 16 000 former combatants had been disarmed, but an estimated 28 000 continued to roam the countryside (Adeyemi 2000:2).

In a letter to the Security Council dated 7 March 2000 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that progress in the peace process had been slow. He made specific mention of little progress in disarmament in the northern and eastern parts of the country and reported that the security situation generally 'remained tense and volatile'. He also referred to several incidents involving UNAMSIL and combatants, and elements from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) having seized a large number of weapons, ammunition and vehicles from a UNAMSIL contingent (UN Secretary-General 2000:5). As the UN deployed further to reinforce peace in Sierra Leone, RUF rebels and renegade government troops continued to disrupt the peace process, carrying out a number of attacks on UN personnel (Adeyemi 2000:2).

After a disastrous encounter with the RUF in May 2000, when the UN suffered one of its worst setbacks in the history of UN peacekeeping,[3] the UN made significant strides towards achieving its goals in Sierra Leone. Having moved speedily to increase the capacity of its mission after observers and critics hammered UNAMSIL severely for its role and profile, the UN forces in Sierra Leone appeared to be better organised and equipped. To this end, UNAMSIL was able to play a meaningful role in helping Sierra Leone's war-ravaged population move towards an election process. In his report of 14 March 2002, the Secretary-General reported the following with regard to the peace process (UN Secretary-General 2002:2–5):

■ The overall security situation in Sierra Leone was generally stable

■ The disarmament process had progressed well with a total of 47 076 combatants disarmed between 18 May 2001 and 17 January 2002

■ Some 1 723 ex-combatants had been selected for reintegration into the Sierra Leonean army

■ Substantial progress had been made in preparing for presidential and parliamentary elections

■ Political parties could continue to prepare for the scheduled elections

The Secretary-General furthermore reported that the disarmament process and the deployment of UNAMSIL throughout the country had created a relatively more secure environment, which provided the opportunity for Sierra Leone to hold free, fair and credible elections, and to concentrate on national reconciliation and recovery, as well as building sustainable institutions. He also mentioned that the international community invested heavily in Sierra Leone, both politically and financially (UN Secretary-General 2002:11–12).

Against this background, the general elections of 14 May 2002 represented a significant step forward in Sierra Leone's elusive search for peace and democracy. Though the elections did not result in a change of government, the participation of the RUF signalled a commitment to both peace and the democratisation process. One of the remarkable features of the 2002 elections was the level of public engagement and the peaceful nature of the campaign process (Jalloh 2002:59, 61).

Another remarkable or most outstanding feature – especially significant from a peacebuilding perspective – was the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the Lomé Peace Agreement of 1999 between Sierra Leone's government and the RUF. The TRC, clearly meant to be a nation-building project, was intended to address impunity, to break the cycle of violence, to provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, and to obtain a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation. Modelled on similar past commissions in Chile, Guatemala and South Africa, the TRC intended to investigate the causes, nature and extent of human rights violations that occurred in the country, help restore the human dignity of victims, and promote national reconciliation. Apart from fostering national reconciliation through the TRC, it was also decided to establish a Special UN Court to prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law in Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996. This means that the tribunal have power to prosecute those who committed crimes against civilians, including murder, torture and rape, as well as those who committed or ordered the commission of serious violations against the Geneva Convention (IRIN 2002:2–3). In what has been described as 'welcoming news' and 'momentous events in Africa' (Aboagye 2006:1), Charles Taylor, the former president of neighbouring Liberia who backed the RUF insurgency by providing arms and training to the RUF in exchange for diamonds, was arrested and on 3 March 2007 charged by the UN's Special Court for Sierra Leone with crimes against humanity, violations of the Geneva Convention and other serious violations of international humanitarian law (Special Court for Sierra Leone 2007:1).

Other issues that received attention in the peacebuilding process relate to programmes in the fields of humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, the consolidation of civil authority, the promotion of human rights and good governance, and also the restoration of the legal system. Without going into much detail, it should be noted that considerable amounts were invested and practical aid provided by the

European Union, and the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. For instance, US total humanitarian and emergency contribution in the fiscal year 2002, including grants to the World Food Programme and other aid agencies, assistance to refugees, programmes to combat HIV/Aids, reintegration of combatants and development programmes, amounted to US$56 million (HRW 2003:7–9).

Approximately five years after its creation, UNAMSIL approached the end of its mandate in December 2004. Amongst other successes, UNAMSIL managed to disarm some 75 000 former combatants, facilitated significant improvement to infrastructure, expanded state authority, and almost rebuilt the national police to the target of 9 500 officials. Although UNAMSIL enjoyed considerable success, certain challenges remained. Low levels of public confidence in the capabilities of the police and armed forces, especially, posed serious security challenges. However, it was generally felt that should the peace process – and post-conflict peacebuilding – prove to be successful, it would represent a major success in international peacekeeping in one of Africa's most conflict-ridden states (Molukanele et al 2004:42–43).

All in all, it could be said that the post-conflict peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone clearly involved a human security approach, specifically based on a liberty/rights and rule of law dimension; a freedom from fear/safety of people's dimension; and a freedom from want/equity and social justice dimension. Moreover, it involved a willingness to make a difference on the ground in preventing conflicts or establishing the basic conditions for making sustainable security and development possible. The following section expands on this in more detail.

Sierra Leone in a contemporary context

It has already been said that Sierra Leone remains one of the world's poorest countries. An estimated 26 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty, while 70 per cent live on less that US$1 per day. Today, most households live in substandard shelters and only 59 per cent of the population have access to safe drinking water. This is exacerbated by high unemployment and deteriorating health conditions with a growing incidence in HIV/Aids, typhoid, malaria and tuberculosis. These figures are indeed reason for serious concern as the relation between economics and violent armed conflict is clear from the following (Solomon 2006:221):

■ Since the mid-1980s, 15 of the world's 20 poorest countries have experienced violent conflict

■ Half of the world's low-income countries are either engaged in conflict or are in the process of transition to conflict

■ Almost every low-income country at least shares a border with a country in conflict, if not embroiled in its own conflict

■ In the 1990s, 70 million of the world's poor were displaced from their homes as a result of conflict. In Africa alone, one third of its countries have produced refugees

Although much remains to be done to further the peace process in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL's achievements in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding have certainly been numerous and noteworthy, ranging from disarming and demobilising over 75 000 combatants, including some 6 000 child soldiers, who were reintegrated back into society (UNAMSIL DDR Coordination Section 2003:5), to overseeing the May 2002 democratic election process. It also facilitated the regulation of much of the diamond mining industry in a relatively short time. Hence official diamond trade grew from US$10 million in 2000 to about US$130 million in 2004 (Bell 2005:2).

Having said this, much of any post-conflict peace building depends on a successful process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). In the case of Sierra Leone the DDR process was to be implemented by the UN and various other role-players, including the government of Sierra Leone with the support of ECOWAS and the UNDP. The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) was established to act on behalf of the government, while the World Bank was tasked with marshalling resources to fund the process. DDR was carried out in three phases as a comprehensive and progressive operation to remove arms from communities and integrating ex-combatants into their communities (UNAMSIL DDR Coordination Section 2003:5).

Yet, Sierra Leone remains in a precarious state and it needs the international community to overcome further challenges in dealing with its delicate peace. In the words of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone (cited in Bell 2005): 'The country is fragile. We can't continue with the peacekeeping. We need peacebuilding. My appeal is that the country is ready for the next phase of development.' This said, the possibility that the two million unemployed youth in Sierra Leone, many of whom are former combatants, may take up arms again to fight, is a real one. In the early days of the conflict the youth were unemployed or living in precarious economic circumstances. They were motivated by the promise of both financial compensation and the opportunity to loot. Mismanagement of natural resources is another potential source of conflict. According to estimates, more than 50 per cent of the lucrative diamond mining industry remains unlicensed and considerable illegal smuggling is still the order of the day (Bell 2005:2).

In late August 2005, the Security Council approved the establishment of the UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). UNIOSIL is mandated to help the

government reinforce human rights by strongly supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and to conduct free and fair elections in 2007. Furthermore, the mission attempts to sustain the progress achieved as it undertakes the co-ordination of UN efforts to deal with arms and human trafficking, as well as illegal trade in the region. It also provides security for the Special Court of Sierra Leone (Bell 2005:5).

It should also be noted that the generous contributions made by the European Community, Denmark, Ireland, Japan, the UK and the US were key to the peacebuilding process (UN Secretary-General 2007:12). Also, since the end of 2002, the UNDP, like many other role players, focused much of its advocacy and resources on assisting the people of Sierra Leone in addressing the fundamental causes of the conflict. Based on the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Sierra Leone, the UNDP concentrated on three focus areas: democracy, poverty reduction, and peace and development. Within these areas, a mix of interventions are under way that balance immediate needs for development and reconstruction with the longer-term objectives of reform and capacity building to assist the country on its much needed path of sustainable development (UNDP 2007e:1–2). Firstly, democracy as a focus area involves the following (UNDP 2007b:1–2):

- *Democratic governance:* The UNDP provides support to the electoral systems as a contribution to the consolidation to democracy in the country. In practice this means developing the capacity of the National Electoral Commission and the Political Party Registration Commission, among others

- *Decentralisation and local governance:* UNDP renders support to the decentralisation process following the local elections and reestablishment of local government in 2004. In practice this boils down to the implementation of the Local Government Act of 2004

- *Public administration reform:* UNDP's support in this area focuses on supporting efficient, responsive, transparent administration in the public sector

- *Justice, human rights and security:* This focuses on the security sector and transitional justice reform in a holistic manner to ensure equity, due process, maintenance of public order, enforcement of the rule of law and human rights application

Secondly, poverty reduction and human development are aimed at assisting the government in fighting chronic and pervasive poverty in the country, as well as at efforts to support an environment conducive to attracting the kind of investment necessary to address poverty and meet specific development goals. Key programmes are aimed at, for instance, ensuring effective aid co-ordination for poverty reduction,

microfinance and micro-enterprise development, and private sector development (UNDP 2007d:1–2).

Thirdly, the focus area of peace and development is meant to give meaning to the need to move from 'recovery' to 'development'. Specific programmes are running in the fields of youth and job creation, community empowerment, community security, and disaster risk management, among others (UNDP 2007c:1–2).

On 12 October 2006, Solomon Berewa, Vice-President of Sierra Leone, reflected on some of the achievements in post-conflict Sierra Leone. It was pointed out that the authority of the state had been restored throughout the country, combatants had been disarmed, one million displaced persons had been resettled, public and social institutions had been re-established, government infrastructure had been rehabilitated and rebuilt, basic services had been provided and businesses had been encouraged to return. Also, the economy had been opened and enjoyed macro-economic stability, and impressive programmes with the Bretton Woods Institutions had boosted the economy to a growth rate of over 7 per cent. At the same time, Berewa outlined two difficult tasks to be addressed in Sierra Leone, namely that of youth development and capacity limitations.

As far as youth development is concerned: Sierra Leone has a young population with over 60 per cent below the age of 35, and almost two million between the ages of 15 and 35 – the majority of whom are unemployed. Obviously, without jobs they are disenchanted, volatile and ready to erupt into violence. In Berewa's words (2006): ' [U]nless we can provide hope now, to the growing numbers of young people, they will either become fodder for ruthless and unsuccessful politicians, or resort to crime and other anti-social activities.' As far as capacity limitations are concerned, he alluded to the point that capacity weaknesses pervade all areas of the economy, and the effects are evident at all levels, especially in the public service. This has a negative effect on sustained levels of economic growth and the delivery of basic services, as well as on the fight against corruption (Berewa 2006).

With regard to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, it was reported on 6 February 2007 to the General Assembly that 'important achievements have been made to date in restoring peace and stability and promoting post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone'. In the words of the chairperson of the Country Specific Meetings on Sierra Leone of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (2007):

> There can be no denial of the actual and potential contribution that the Peacebuilding Commission can make to the promotion of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. With the continued involvement of all stakeholders – the government of Sierra Leone, the PBC's [Peacebuilding Commission's] full membership, the various UN bodies on the ground, NGOs, civil society

and the private sector – and with the continued engagement by the General Assembly and other UN bodies, we will be able to make a difference.

Finally, as much as peacebuilding in Sierra Leone has thus far been commendable, Vice President Berewa's reminder, issued in New York in October 2006, that failures in development policy and practice were at the root of past conflict, should be taken seriously. Likewise, notice should be taken of his reference to major constraints in consolidating peace and guaranteeing sustainable development with regard to youth development, weak capacity for service delivery, weak government structures and poor physical infrastructure. He also rightly argued that the building of institutions and mechanisms to provide the social, political and economic environment that will facilitate growth should be pursued vigorously (Berewa 2006):

> Indeed our success as a viable state, pursuing development that is sustainable, is in jeopardy unless we tackle immediately, certain obstacles in our path which, if not removed, may hinder our progress towards long term peace and stability.

It should also be noted that Sierra Leone's armed forces continue to suffer from a serious lack of logistical support, equipment and accommodation. Some 55 per cent of military personnel and their families are living in substandard conditions. This obviously has a negative impact on the state and morale of the armed forces (UN Secretary-General 2007:4), which are supposed to be the custodians of the peace process in the country. Having said this, lasting peace cannot be realised without addressing the political, economic, social and security spheres and their marked interconnectedness (Bell 2005:5).

Conclusion

A more holistic, current-day understanding of peace distinguishes between two notions of peace. On the one hand negative peace exists when there is a mere absence of war. On the other hand, positive peace is more embracing and holistic and includes issues such as prospects for social development. Working towards positive peace implies that peacemakers have to play roles beyond the mere signing of a ceasefire or peace agreement. Both state and civil society need to be involved in arriving at sustainable (positive) peace through structural and non-structural measures. Structural measures include political democratisation, economic reconstruction of the judicial system, education and training, health and housing, and arms control. Non-structural measures related to reconciliation include issues such as healing the past, commitment to the future, reconciling values, and developing a belief in 'us' plural loyalties (Solomon 2006:222). The notion of positive peace coincides with the contention of De Coning (2006:4) that contemporary UN

peace operations are in effect peacebuilding operations, in that they have mandates that combine political, security, humanitarian, development and human rights dimensions in the post-conflict phase – all aimed at addressing both the immediate consequences and root causes of a conflict.

It is evident from the case of Sierra Leone that there has been growing international awareness that peacebuilding should be an essential part of any multinational peacekeeping undertaking in Africa. The citizens of this West African state went to the polls on 26 and 27 February 1996 before there was any sign of a ceasefire or peace agreement. Instead of the usual 'UN prescribed pattern' of ceasefire, peace agreement, demobilisation and then elections, the 'peace process' of 1996 began with the staging of elections. Not surprisingly, Sierra Leone's had a short-lived experiment with democracy. In 2002, there was clearly a different methodology as peacebuilding measures, instruments and programmes were put in place. Policy instruments outside the toolbox of traditional security policy were mobilised and development-related interventions were made in the search for democracy and durable peace.

In his report to the Security Council of 7 May 2007, the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, stated that Sierra Leone continued to make progress in the peace consolidation process. The registration of voters for the July 2007 general elections commenced on 26 February and was completed on 18 March 2007. Some 91 per cent of eligible voters were registered. Meanwhile, the political parties have stepped up their electoral campaigning activities in democratic fashion. At the time of writing, Sierra Leone has gone through the scheduled round of presidential and legislative elections that were hailed as free and fair by international observers. Thus general positive developments have strengthened the prospects for long-term peace. Yet the security situation in Sierra Leone remains fragile, although stable. The high rates of youth unemployment and negative public perceptions about the lack of improvement in the living conditions of the overwhelming majority of the population remain the key threats to the country's fragile stability (UN Secretary-General 2007:1–3).

Finally, it could be stated that notwithstanding many commendable positive developments and undertakings, several problems still need to be urgently addressed. Progress in the justice sector remains slow. The devolution of authority to district/town level remains a serious challenge. This devolution is necessary to reconnect the centre with rural communities and to promote socio-economic development and broader community participation (UN Secretary-General 2007:7, 9). In order to further advance peace consolidation, it is also imperative that the security sector be strengthened so that the armed forces can execute their tasks effectively. Furthermore, the fostering of a vibrant private sector is needed to transform the economy and create employment opportunities. Also, efforts to step up the judiciary and increased attention to the promotion of human rights is of great importance to support social and economic transformation

(UN Secretary-General 2007:9, 13) – all with a view to moving to lasting peace and sustainable development in a country that has only fairly recently emerged from a brutal conflict and a devastated socio-political structure.

Notes

1　UNAMSIL replaced UNOMSIL after the UN decided on a much larger mission to be deployed to Sierra Leone.
2　The crisis in Sierra Leone since the early 1990s is well documented and will not be discussed here in much detail.
3　Following a number of incidents since January 2000, the RUF strongly rocked the shaky peace accord in May 2000 by launching attacks on towns and UN personnel. After killing four Kenyan soldiers (three others were wounded) in an attack on a UN contingent, the RUF also captured some 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers as hostages.

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