SIPRI, 13 December 2006
Draft speaking notes for the SG:

The period that separates us from the end of the Cold War – has been a very intense period of political change across the globe. The initial enthusiasm brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall was quickly stymied by new kinds of conflict that necessarily required new kinds of approaches and solutions to conflict and peacebuilding efforts. Further exacerbated by violent acts of terrorism over the past decade, the current panorama is not a positive one and urgent attention needs to be given to the causes of the new threats without forgetting those that already existed.

Notwithstanding, we have learned a lot over the past ten to fifteen years; unfortunately most of the lessons learned have been through trial and error. International organisations – the United Nations primarily, but also regional organisations such as the OSCE and the more recently established African Union, have had to face new situations, very different from those that informed early peace-making and peace-keeping in the sixties and seventies. The terrain was totally un-chartered and quite dangerous; in fact little attention appears to have been paid to political analysis and strategic forecast in that period. In Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia, in Haiti and other places, serious errors were committed such as:

- Reacting too late and too slowly to the accumulation of the causes of conflict;
- Intervening in the conflict without proper analysis and understanding of the issues at stake;
- Making peace hastily and by accommodating the protagonists of the war rather than looking at the viability and sustainability of peace;
- Withdrawing the area prematurely without having planted the seeds of a more durable peace, etc...

Interventions that failed have produced disasters. Yet, there have been successful conflict prevention efforts as well, due to international engagement and wise national leadership. One may mention South Africa in 1994 or Macedonia in 2001. If Rwanda is the genocide that happened, – says African researcher and political scientist

Mahmoud Mamdani, South Africa is the one that did not happen ("*When victims become killers*")

Lessons had to be drawn and they have been drawn – which is not to say that they are all being consistently implemented today. Yet, the international community is definitely better equipped today with both analytical tools and organisational skills. Innumerable studies have been carried out; new research centres have been created and new regional and international bodies established. The recently established UN Peacebuilding Commission is the latest addition to the institutionality of peace. As we know, the support of Sweden and Norway to the work of the *UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* was instrumental in bringing about the proposal to establish the peace-building commission. We should also mention the invaluable contribution of professor Wallensteen's Department of Peace and Conflict Research to that process. Though the peace-building commission will deal with post-conflict peace-building rather than conflict prevention, it may become a significant addition to existing UN resources. However, it still remains to be seen if the PBC and its Support Office will actually be provided with the real means to function. Furthermore, we should not forget that the PBC has limited capacity and for the initial period will dedicate its efforts to only two countries. In the meantime conflict and efforts to resolve them and build the peace will have to continue as usual.

The afore-mentioned efforts are certainly having an impact on the ground; however, the real effect is not easy to determine in the confused interaction of peace and conflict-drivers. Today, messages from the field are contradictory and not easy to interpret: on the positive side, we are told that the number of conflicts has decreased since the nineties. What sets a shadow on these indicators is that human security and human development indicators have continued to decrease in a large number of countries. According to the UNDP's 2005 Human Development Report, 18 countries with a combined population of 460 million people, registered lower scores on the human development index than in the 1990s. This is not enough to conclude that the world is a more dangerous place today than it was ten years ago. Yet, it does show that in many places important root causes of violent conflict are still alive and well.

Most recently, and further to recommendations put forward in the Brahimi report and in line with work currently being carried out at the policy level, multi-dimensional peace-keeping and peace-building operations have and continue to broaden their scope to include democracy-building among the key components of their mandates. This support includes the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of former combatants into society, the organisation and holding of elections; the reform or the building of a new constitution; the reform of the justice sector and of security institutions; the reform of national public administration bodies; support to local government and decentralisation processes; supporting the role of women in every dimension….Early withdrawal from these activities without ensuring the appropriate follow-up has been a major problem in the past; however, current initiatives such as the integration of planning processes in support of national development programmes that have a strong emphasis on the root causes of conflict and democratic governance are another interesting development. This kind of progress nurtures significant hope since providing the environment for a legitimate and effective democratic government is certainly a strong guarantor of sustainable peace.

Here lie some of the most serious challenges to the new international peace-building machinery.

I would like to highlight two types of challenges:

- <u>The first</u> is how to strike the right balance between the sometimes competing imperatives of peace-making and democracy-building
- <u>The second</u> is how to ensure the effectiveness of democracy-building efforts

As to the <u>first challenge</u>, its very assertion may sound contradictory: are peace and democracy not complementary and supportive of each other? Yes, definitely, they are, in as much as they tend to converge and ultimately to meet in the reality we can easily observe: where democracy is solidly implanted, peace seems to be so as well. However, the building of the two does not follow the same path and in the short run differences are significant: <u>actors</u> are not the same; <u>methodologies</u> differ, as does <u>timing</u>.

<u>As for Actors</u>: By necessity, peace is made, at least at the beginning, among those principally responsible for the conflict; democracy-building needs to empower citizens and to disempower the warlords;

<u>As for Methodologies</u>: making peace will often require power-sharing; when group grievances are the overwhelming social feature, power sharing may need to be built into the system and to stay there for a longer period. However, it may also freeze social mobility and hamper the emergence of citizens as protagonists of democracy.

<u>As for time-frames: they are obviously different</u>. Making peace is urgent by definition. Democracy building is a long-term process by definition. The problem is not purely theoretical and has very practical implications on the ground as the establishment of democratic institutions is becoming a regular item on most peace-building agendas.

As evidenced in the DRC, preparing free and fair elections where no elections were held for decades takes time. As evidenced in East Timor, Afghanistan and other countries emerging from conflict, ensuring the legitimacy of the constitution is not an easy process either, not to speak about the reform of the justice and security sectors. <u>Interim arrangements</u> are often the only way to <u>reconcile the urgency of peace making and the time necessary for democracy-building</u>. Interim arrangements may be a learning process for political parties and other actors of democracy, an opportunity for new leaders to learn about dialogue, trade-offs, building support by political means. Rebel leaders need to learn politics. Mainstream politicians need to learn how to live with former guerrilla leaders etc...South Africa is, again, a good example of the effectiveness of interim arrangements. Let us hope that Nepal will be another example.

<u>The second challenge</u> – how to ensure the effectiveness of democracy-building efforts, particularly in post conflict transitional settings - is one of International IDEA's priority concerns. Our efforts are directed towards <u>providing methodological tools</u>, <u>facilitating policy development</u> and <u>supporting concrete democratic reforms</u> in Latin America, Africa and Asia-Pacific, and increasingly in the Middle East.

A recent IDEA study entitled "*Democracy, Conflict and Human Security – Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century*" allowed us to distil some important findings. They still need to be tested among stakeholders of democracy-building processes – national and international ones – but they do offer important initial guidelines. I would like to highlight those I consider to be the most important:

First: the need for **national ownership** and **legitimacy of the international intervention**: In order to provoke positive and sustainable changes in the local reality, international efforts in support of democracy must themselves be legitimate and perceived as such by both the local population and by the international community. Unfortunately, this has become the weakest point of international democracy-building efforts since 9/11. Linkages that have been made between the "war on terror" and the promotion of democracy have prompted a deeply polarised discourse on the promotion of democracy. Whether we like it or not, the fact is that a significant part of the world's population – and not only in the so-called Greater Middle East - sees international efforts to promote democracy as the imposition of alien interests and ideologies through the use of force. International assistance to democracy needs to reclaim its multilateral credibility and legitimacy, the one it had or seemed to have acquired at the end of the Cold War. In a world that seems has been drifting for several years towards political polarisation rather than integration, this is, of course, easier said than done.

Second - the **key importance of context** is self-evident. There is no model or blue-print, solutions need to be tailor-made.

Third, the need for a **long term approach**: Democracy is not a locomotive that you can put on tracks and it runs by itself. This **time factor** has much to do with the fact that **processes** in democracy-building are as important as **contents**. A constitution can be picture perfect, modern, secular, with mechanisms for horizontal and vertical accountability well designed and tested in other countries. It will not work if it is not truly owned by those who are supposed to implement it. **Building ownership takes time**. It took more than six years to negotiate the post-apartheid constitution of South Africa and eight years to develop the white paper on Defence. Yet, donor countries

often want to see quick results in order to reap the benefits with the electorate back home.

Fourth, an effective democracy assistance approach is one that **integrates the many facets of democracy**, **not only in terms of institutional architecture** (elections, constitutions, political party regulation, justice reform etc...) but also in terms of **building national capacity for dialogue and reconciliation**. This is about building **democratic practice** and the **culture** of democracy.

Last but not least - **is the capacity of democracy to deliver**. Nothing is more conflict inducing than unfulfilled promises. Emerging political leaders in transitional environments often tend to make unrealistic promises in order to gain new supporters and strengthen their constituencies. Donor support in such cases should have a "sobering" objective before the democratic change (warning against unrealistic promises) and a stronger and well-targeted material support once the democratic government has assumed its functions. This support should not side-line the opposition, rather include it and ensure that the new political configuration of the country is not projected as one of winners and losers. Often what happens is the opposite and the pre-conflict tensions remain unresolved.

Furthermore, increasing the delivery capacity of emerging democracies in terms of development and provision of basic services to the population has an exceptional importance. This requires international engagement at two different levels:

- First, at the level of direct assistance, it requires coupling support to democratic institutions with effective reconstruction, rehabilitation and employment-generating programmes.

- Second, by contributing to a more predictable international economic environment, including and not least on trade, that enables the state to protect its citizens and rewards longer term social development investment – in public education and health for example. The discussion of donor coherence, increasingly invoked today, needs to have such a very broad perspective if it is to be meaningful.

Let me conclude on exactly this point – the need for international commitment to be measured, persistent and coherent. There are no quick fixes, neither in conflict management nor democracy building. And efforts to produce quick results risk prolonging crises rather than resolving them.