BRIEF V. ECOSOC's Relationship with the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council

This brief is part of a series aimed to provide background information on ECOSOC strengthening. Briefs include (i) ECOSOC mandates and evolution of functions; (ii) policy dialogue and guidance; (iii) guiding and promoting a coherent and coordinated UN system; (iv) subsidiary bodies; (v) relationship with the General Assembly, Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council; (vi) countries in special situations; and (vii) addressing emergency issues.

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« General Assembly »

While the UN Charter vested critical functions in the Economic and Social Council, these are discharged by the Council under the authority of the General Assembly. As such, the Council reports to the General Assembly annually and follows up on the implementation of the guidance provided by the General Assembly. The presentation of the reports of ECOSOC in the GA has for some years now not given rise to a substantive debate. The alignment of the agendas of the GA, ECOSOC and other bodies has been addressed through informal consultations over several recent sessions of the GA, beginning with the 70th session. Since the seventy-third session, cooperation between the President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC has been strengthened, including through monthly meetings and joint briefings and meetings. One beneficial outcome has been the prevention of overlapping meetings on the same or similar issues. Some concern has been expressed by Member States, in the context of the review of

the GA Second Committee work, about overlapping substantive focus of various resolutions.

« Security Council »

The relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council is enshrined in the Charter of the Organization. Article 65 states that: "The Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council and shall assist the Security Council upon its request". On this basis, the Security Council requested ECOSOC in 1998 to contribute to the creation of a long-term programme of support for Haiti (resolution 1212 -1998)¹. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (AHAGH) was formed, the report was completed with the support of the Haitian authorities and its results transmitted to the Security Council and the Group was terminated. The Group was reactivated by the Economic and Social Council in 2004 and has occasionally briefed the Security Council about its work.

Using the model of the Advisory Group on Haiti, the Council, at the request of the GA, created similar Ad Hoc Groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflict – one on Guinea Bissau and on Burundi in the early 2000s. This was in response to ongoing discussions in the Security Council and the General Assembly on ways to promote peace and sustainable development in Africa due to the number of civil conflicts in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These Groups prefigured the country specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission, for which they constituted an "avant garde". The two countries (Guinea-Bissau and Burundi) were transferred to the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Groups are no longer active.

The Security Council also created an Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and because the Security Council was seized of the two countries, it created opportunities for both bodies to work together, with the Chair of the Security Council Group invited to participate in the meetings of the two Groups. Joint missions to Guinea-Bissau took place, with ECOSOC focusing on socio-economic issues and the Security Council on political-security considerations, but under the same overall messaging on peace, security and sustainable development.

Over the years, the Security Council Presidents have invited the ECOSOC President to speak in the Council, usually during open meetings on issues where there is a development component, such as gender, HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention, natural resource management security sector reform, complex crises and UN response, conflicts in Africa and in Haiti.

¹ This was the second time in the history of the United Nations that this provision had been used. The first example was when, on 31 July 1950, the Security Council adopted resolution 35/ on assistance for the civilian population of Korea by which it requested, under Article 65, the assistance of the Economic and Social Council. This resolution was placed before the Economic and Social Council at its eleventh session. On 2 August 1950, the Council decided to add to its agenda the item "Assistance for the civil population of Korea".

Meetings with the participation of Presidents of Charter bodies have been ad hoc and dependent on the President – no institutional mechanism is in place. In 2008, ECOSOC hosted a special meeting on the global food crisis with the participation of the President of the Security Council (UK) and the President of the General Assembly.

« Peacebuilding Commission »

The legislative basis for a relationship between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission is derived from General Assembly resolutions 60/180 and 61/16. The institutional junction between the two bodies operates at three levels: 1) the presence within the Organizational Committee of the Commission of 7 Members of the Council; 2) the fact that the Commission establishes its agenda based inter alia on requests for advice from the Council "with the consent of a concerned Member State in exceptional circumstances on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict and with which the Security Council is not seized in accordance with Article 12 of the Charter" (para. 12 (b)); 3) the fact that the Council can take action on the recommendations by the Peacebuilding Commission (para.14).

In its resolution 61/16, the General Assembly underlined the experience of ECOSOC in the area of post-conflict peacebuilding and the success of its ad hoc advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict and invited the Peacebuilding Commission to benefit from it (OP21, A/RES/61/16). Meetings between ECOSOC and PBC have been convened regularly since 68/1. In 2016, GA and Security Council resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282(2016)) stressed the importance of closer cooperation between ECOSOC and the PBC, and the centrality of development to sustaining peace. They encouraged the Peacebuilding Commission to draw on the expertise of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies. In these resolutions, the GA and the Security Council called for a "comprehensive review of United Nations peacebuilding" to be conducted during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Over the years, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) have forged a working relationship. The Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission was providing an oral briefing to the Council during the consideration of the agenda item on African countries emerging from conflict, and now the PBC Chair participates in the Transition Meeting.

Between 2017-2019, the joint meetings of ECOSOC and the PBC focused on the situation in the Sahel, looking at interlinkages between sustaining peace and sustainable development, as well as the implications of climate change in the region. This work led to the adoption of a resolution on support to the Sahel region by the Economic and Social Council, aimed at helping address the multidimensional challenges in the region, and strengthening collective engagement of all stakeholders in achieving sustainable development and peace.

Recent joint meetings of ECOSOC and the PBC focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact and recovery, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace. During the 2023 session of ECOSOC, two joint meetings were convened to promote coherence and impact for peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sustainable development efforts on the ground. The need for an integrated approach to peace, humanitarian action and development and a greater emphasis on prevention and enhanced coherence on the ground were key takeaways from these meetings. The outcomes of joint meetings are usually a summary by the President and Chair.

« ECOSOC and the interlinkages between peace and development »

The inclusion of the issues related to "peaceful societies" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was considered an important step. Sustaining peace is critical for achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals and in turn, the entire 2030 Agenda can contribute to sustaining peace – before, during and after conflict.

While the PBC focuses on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, the Council has a mandate to promote economic and social progress in the context of long-term sustainable development. The Economic and Social Council has played an important role in developing mechanisms to respond to the problems faced by countries emerging from conflict to assist them on their path to long-term development. Currently, the agenda of the Council includes consideration of agenda items related to country-specific situations, such as the report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti and the integrated, coherent and coordinated support to South Sudan, as well as the Sahel region, which are considered in the new Transition Meeting.

The quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) has also provided guidance on transition in the field. During its various Operational Activities Segments, the Council has held discussions on the interlinkages between development and humanitarian actions and the role of the UN development system in countries emerging from conflict. The discussions emphasized that sustaining peace required a shift from coordinated to integrated approaches, and that political will could enable whole of system approach despite silos and operational barriers. Discussions have also underscored that the UN development system should maintain a strong development focus, while ensuring coordination across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actions.

The work of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies has also addressed the issues pertinent to countries emerging from conflict. For example, some commissions, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)² and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)³, have adopted resolutions with relevant policy advice for countries emerging from conflict. The fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNFPFII) focused on the theme of "indigenous peoples: conflict, peace and resolution" in 2016, and the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) has been working on public governance for results in post-conflict and post-disaster countries since 2011 and held discussions on "Building strong institutions for sustainable development in conflict-affected countries" in 2021.

« Human Rights Council »

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has a strong interest in human rights which is part of its Charter mandate. It receives reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), a body that is simultaneously a subsidiary body of the Council and a Human Rights Treaty Body. The mandate of CESCR addresses key sustainable development goals on poverty reduction, inequality and decent work, among others. The work of the Committee is quite relevant to the 2030 Agenda as it reviews implementation of some of the goals at country level. In doing so, it provides practical advice on ways that countries can ensure that no one is left behind.

The 2030 Agenda is strongly grounded in international human rights standards and strives to leave no one behind. In March 2018, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on "The need for an integrated approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the full realization of human rights, focusing holistically on the means of implementation" (A/HRC/RES/37/25). The Council decided to invite the President of the Economic and Social Council, commencing in 2018, to brief, on an annual basis, the Human Rights Council, during one of its regular sessions, on the discussions of the high-level political forum, including on gaps, challenges and progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on the means of implementation taken together as an integrated package.

In June 2020, the Human Rights Council adopted <u>resolution 43/19</u> on the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution called for three half-day intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be held in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and has been used to develop HRC contribution to the HLPF. In 2023, the Human Rights Council adopted <u>resolution 52/14</u> on the same topic, in which it decided to dedicate 3 days to human rights and the 2030 Agenda, during which States and other stakeholders can "voluntarily share good practices, achievements, challenges and lessons learned concerning integrated and gender responsive approaches in the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda". The focus of the meetings will be informed by the themes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 HLPF and the summary reports of the discussions "should be made available to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, where applicable."

² In 2004, ECOSOC adopted a resolution (E/2004/25), at the recommendation of CCPCJ, on "the rule of law and development: strengthening the rule of law and the reform of criminal justice institutions, with emphasis on technical assistance, including in post-conflict reconstruction". This was followed by resolution (E/RES/2006/25) on "strengthening the rule of law and the reform of criminal justice institutions, including in post-conflict reconstruction".

³ In 1998, the CSW considered the issue of women and armed conflict and adopted agreed conclusions for the accelerated implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular the chapter VI.E on "women and armed conflict". Furthermore, CSW adopts a biennial resolution on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts.

⁴ The human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties. Each State party to a treaty has an obligation to take steps to ensure that everyone in the State can enjoy the rights set out in the treaty.