

## **Peacebuilding Commission**

### **Ambassadorial-level meeting on Guatemala**

**4 June 2024**

#### **Chair's Summary**

On 4 June 2024, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an inaugural Ambassadorial-level meeting on Guatemala. The President of the Republic of Guatemala, the Indigenous Mayor of Nebaj, El Quiché, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support participated in the meeting. The meeting discussed peacebuilding priorities under the new administration of H.E. President Bernardo Arévalo, explored potential partnerships with the Peacebuilding Commission and sought to mobilize international support for the government's transformative reform agenda. The engagement envisaged an opportunity for stronger collaboration between the Commission and Guatemala, leveraging the PBC's advisory and bridging role to support national peacebuilding priorities. Member states commended Guatemala's efforts in establishing democratic governance and advancing gender equality. They expressed support for Guatemala's comprehensive commitment to national peacebuilding efforts and multilateralism, noting the establishment of a national pact focused on education, healthcare, the environment and sustainable development.

1. On 4 June, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Sérgio França Danese, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Guatemala to provide H.E. President Arévalo an opportunity to present his Administration's peacebuilding priorities, explore potential partnerships with the Peacebuilding Commission and mobilize international support for the government's transformative reform agenda. It is envisaged that this engagement will enhance the collaboration between the Commission and Guatemala, leveraging the PBC's advisory and bridging role in support of the country's national peacebuilding priorities.
2. In his opening remarks, the PBC Chair expressed gratitude for the presence of the President of Guatemala to the Commission, highlighting the country's dedication to peacebuilding. He noted that the meeting was convened at the request of the Government of Guatemala, emphasizing Guatemala's commitment to multilateralism and its close cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. He underlined the importance of displaying the PBC's work on a voluntary basis, with full respect for the sovereignty of the countries that engage with the Commission and seek the support from the United Nations' Peacebuilding Architecture. The Chair also reiterated the PBC's advisory and bridging roles in supporting Guatemala's peacebuilding priorities, while underscoring the Commission's priority is to share successful experiences, good practices, and the challenges faced by countries under its consideration. The Chair further highlighted the Government of Guatemala's commitments to gender equality, the active participation of indigenous populations, especially indigenous women, and the protection of children and the most vulnerable.

3. **H.E. Bernardo Arévalo, President of the Republic of Guatemala**, briefed on Guatemala's priorities for democracy and peacebuilding, which include the mobilization of citizens, particularly indigenous peoples and civil society, the strengthening of the institutional framework of democracy and the rule of law, and the fight against corruption and impunity. He emphasized that promoting pluralism and integrated solutions are essential to bolstering efforts to foster peace and involve all actors in the process. He stressed that peacebuilding must be grounded in a participatory and inclusive democracy. In alignment with this emphasis on pluralism, H.E. President Arévalo explained that the Government of Guatemala has established a national dialogue with indigenous authorities across the country, as well as with small-scale farmer organizations and the private sector, focusing on national priorities. The President highlighted that Guatemala is undertaking specific efforts to strengthen the empowerment of women and to advance gender equality, and the appointment of a woman to head the army as an illustration of the importance of the issue. He noted that the country would focus on developing national agreements in critical areas such as health care, education, environmental protection, and sustainable development. He called for continuous support from the international community to build upon the progress made since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996. He underlined Guatemala's active commitment to multilateralism, including its preparedness to contribute to debates at the Summit of the Future on strengthening peace and human security, and the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. The President noted that the New Agenda for Peace addresses the universality of prevention and the need for an integrated approach linking peace, sustainable development and human rights. The President acknowledged that the Peacebuilding Fund has significantly contributed to advancing agendas of transitional justice, rule of law and conflict prevention. He appealed for continued support from the Peacebuilding Fund to implement Guatemala's priorities in critical peacebuilding areas. President Arévalo reaffirmed the country's commitment to inclusive peace and democratic governance, recognizing these as fundamental pillars for sustainable development and global stability.
  
4. **Ms. Feliciano Herrera, Indigenous Mayor of Nebaj, El Quiché**, emphasized that indigenous peoples and rural communities have been primary victims under an unjust rule of law in Guatemala. While expressing support for President Arévalo's efforts to eradicate corruption and impunity, she stressed that this responsibility also extends to the entire legislature, judiciary, and municipal authorities, and is not solely the task of the incumbent President. The Mayor commended the President's willingness to listen to indigenous peoples and his unprecedented initiative to establish monthly dialogues with indigenous authorities to address the diverse needs of communities at the territorial level, recognizing them as legitimate authorities. Ms. Herrera reaffirmed that indigenous groups is fully collaborating with the government, acknowledging the government's tangible efforts to combat corruption, impunity, delinquency, and organized crime for the common good and justice. She called for support of donor countries and partner nations to achieve the integrated development of the Guatemalan people, particularly focusing on marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, women, children, older persons, youth, and those in vulnerable situations.

5. **Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support**, expressed appreciation to H.E. President Arévalo for the opportunity to meet during her recent visit to Guatemala as well as for previously hosting ASG Jenča for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, during his visit to Guatemala, underscoring the United Nations' continuous support for the country's peacebuilding efforts. She acknowledged the significance of the 1996 Peace Accords as a pivotal milestone for Guatemala and commended the Government of Guatemala's solid effort towards achieving peace at this critical juncture. Ms. Spehar described Guatemala as a successful example of a post-conflict country that has transitioned towards stabilization and democratization, while recognizing the many challenges that remain. She noted that Guatemala serves as a platform where the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and other key entities can effectively collaborate. The ASG praised the government's transformative reform agenda, which seeks a paradigm shift focused on inclusion and equality for all citizens, particularly improving conditions for marginalized groups and fostering societal consensus through dialogue. Highlighting the government's commitment to gender equality, Ms. Spehar pointed out the establishment of gender parity within the Cabinet of the Executive and the leadership of the Vice President of Guatemala at the 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Commission on the Status of Women in March 2024, where both strongly demonstrate the centrality of gender equality and women's rights in the government's agenda. The ASG also praised Guatemala's renewed commitment to transitional justice and the protection of victims' rights, especially through the establishment of the National Day to commemorate and dignify the victims of sexual violence during the armed conflict, where the Peacebuilding Fund provided initial support to women's organizations. She thanked the President of Guatemala for his steadfast advocacy for peacebuilding and his aspirations to strengthen the country's fundamental institutions and improve the living conditions and welfare of its citizens. She cited the following excerpt from the Peace Accords: "The ending of the armed conflict affords an historic opportunity to renew the country's institutions so that, working in coordination, they can guarantee Guatemalans the rights to life, liberty, justice, security, peace and the full development of the individual." Ms. Spehar proposed further engagement between Guatemala and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture to continue these vital efforts.
6. **Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following remarks:**
- They commended the commitment of President Arévalo to peacebuilding and democratic governance, acknowledging strides made in national reconciliation, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law, combating corruption and impunity, sustaining peace and promoting sustainable development.
  - They underscored the necessity of strengthening the rule of law, ensuring a fair and independent justice system, and establishing sound institutions as essential to building trust and deterring violence.
  - They highlighted the importance of inclusive decision-making and dialogue with various stakeholders, praising the President's efforts to foster dialogues among diverse groups, including indigenous groups, women, youth, farmers, and the private sector, as essential for establishing sound national ownership.
  - They underlined the inclusion of the indigenous population and other marginalized groups and welcomed the President's call for social justice for indigenous groups, pointing out the need for their participation in decision-making processes.

- They stressed the critical importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women at all stages of the peacebuilding process. They also noted the continuous commitment to supporting an inclusive national development vision, ensuring greater access and opportunities for women, and welcomed efforts to achieve a more equal cabinet.
- They expressed support for Guatemala's comprehensive commitment to national peacebuilding efforts and multilateralism, noting the establishment of a national pact focused on education, healthcare, the environment and development, which are areas of priority in the 2030 Agenda.
- They emphasized their support for Guatemala's national efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict and achieve sustaining peace and stability and urged its continued engagement with the Commission by presenting its own national conflict prevention strategy and continuing reconciliation efforts with indigenous peoples, drawing on experiences from countries like Canada, Colombia, and Norway.
- They recognized the meeting as an excellent opportunity to pinpoint how the Peacebuilding Architecture can contribute to a country's efforts and called on the international community to support Guatemala's national priorities, including the establishment of national pacts, empowering historically marginalised groups and youth, and promoting gender equality.
- They appreciated the effective role that the PBC can play in bridging together all relevant stakeholders and member states in concerted efforts to advance Guatemala's peacebuilding priorities, including the focus on national, ownership, inclusivity, localization, and financing.
- They noted inclusive approaches to national prevention efforts require support and reiterated the importance of a robust PBC with the power and the tools to foster much needed preventive strategies.
- They emphasized the importance of south-south cooperation, and the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt, including negative lessons, can be decisive to peacebuilding efforts.
- They commended the Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund for their work on projects in Guatemala aimed at strengthening the rule of law, as well as the social fabric and reducing inequalities in the country.

In response to the remarks by Member States, ASG Spehar noted that it was encouraging for Member States to indicate their very strong interest to continue their engagement with Guatemala and support its peacebuilding trajectory. She indicated that the Peacebuilding Fund's areas of support are based on the government's priorities, which include conflict transformation and dialogue (especially the participation of civil society), the indigenous community through the holistic approach of Humanitarian, Development and Peace nexus, and for inclusion, particularly the empowerment of women and young people.

In his final comments, the President appreciated the support of the PBC, especially in this new phase of strengthening democratic institutions, and highlighted the principles of local ownership, which is essentially local leadership, as well the value of horizontal learning, and that all Member States need to learn from experiences of others, in different places and different points of time.

#### **Chair's recommendations:**

- Call for continuous support for Guatemala to advance its peacebuilding priorities and development efforts.
- Encourage Guatemala to increase opportunities for national platforms for dialogue to harness the capacities of Guatemalan actors, tackling disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous people.
- Encourage the Government of Guatemala to share good practices and challenges, to support the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture.