

Statement by

H.E. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota

Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations
Vice Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

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Mr. President,

I am pleased to brief the Economic and Social Council today in my capacity as the Vice Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. Since the briefing of my predecessor to the Council last year under the same agenda item, the Peacebuilding Commission continued to engage through Country Specific Configurations with six African countries, namely: Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Through its close accompaniment of the post-conflict peacebuilding processes in these countries, the Commission comes to appreciate the challenges that their governments and societies face to build, consolidate and sustain peace.

The Ebola outbreak in three of the six countries has added a new dimension to our understanding and appreciation of the long term and complex nature of establishing resilient institutions, strengthening social cohesion and building confidence between state and society in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing political transitions. As early as August last year, the Peacebuilding Commission convened several meetings from the outset of the health crisis to discuss and draw attention to the immediate and long-term impacts of the Ebola crisis on efforts aimed at building and sustaining peace in the three affected countries. At these meetings, concerns were expressed that the health crisis is having negative effects on socio-economic developments creating risks that the peacebuilding gains in recent years could be undermined, and even reversed.

In a letter to the Secretary-General on 25 November 2014, which I sent in my capacity as the then Chair of the Commission and at the request of the affected countries, I requested an assessment of the impact of the Ebola epidemic focused on the specific areas of security, local governance, political institutions, social cohesion and economic recovery, taking into consideration a long-term and comprehensive regional approach. In the most recently held High-level event hosted by the Secretary-General, the Peacebuilding Commission further advocated for greater attention and resources to these areas and called for practical measures and steps in the national recovery efforts in order to ensure that the peacebuilding gains are not reversed. It also called for sufficient financial allocations in support of strengthening political and social institutions.

Mr. President,

The risk posed by the Ebola crisis, reminds us that our response must be multifaceted, carefully sequenced and sustained over the long term. Support to nationally-owned and inclusive political, socio-economic development and institution-building processes should be prioritized. Political accompaniment and attention becomes imperative around elections and electoral processes where a culture of democracy and dialogue is nascent in countries emerging from conflict. The recent political tensions in Burundi and Guinea during the preparatory phase of elections have also been closely monitored by the PBC.. In Guinea-Bissau, the successful conduct of elections last year opened a new chapter in the country's history. The outlook for the country is promising as national, sub-regional and international actors contribute to sustain the current positive momentum. This is where the Peacebuilding Commission plays a crucial role in support of field-based and operational actors within and outside the UN.

In addition to elections, transitioning from Security Council's security and politically-oriented mandated missions to the development-oriented presence of the United Nations Country Team often brings to the fore another set of political, institutional and economic challenges. Last year, the Peacebuilding Commission accompanied Sierra Leone and Burundi as both mandated UN missions closed down. The Commission concluded from both experiences that transitioning from emergency to development remains a task fraught with challenges. The change in the nature of the United Nations presence and mandate on the ground calls, once again, for calibrated and sustained attention to ongoing political and socio-economic challenges associated with nascent national institutions and governance practices. It also calls for steady steps along the development track. The upcoming transition in Liberia, which is taking place as the country recovers from the Ebola crisis, will test the political resolve to address remaining governance and economic challenges facing the country, as it prepares for important elections in 2017.

Mr. President,

We continue to face the systemic challenge of the short span of attention and commitment from the international community to the complex and long-term path to sustainable peace. Despite the catalytic engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund in several situations, this systemic deficiency continues to manifest itself in financing and capacity gaps

that put our initial investments in peacekeeping at risk. This is where partnerships with regional and international financial institutions and organizations become imperative. The most recently held Peacebuilding Commission's annual session on the theme of "Predictable financing for peacebuilding", which also drew upon participation from the World Bank, IMF and the African Development Bank, concluded that predictable, coherent, risk-tolerant and context-specific international financing for sustaining peace would enable more effective support to the multidimensional nature of peacebuilding. Unfortunately, this type of financing is in short supply.

Moreover, the recently released report of the Advisory Group of Experts, marking the end of the first phase of the ten year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture, pointed to fragmentation in the UN response to address the root causes and drivers of conflict. Their analysis and recommendations provide important input to the intergovernmental negotiation process on the way forward to increase the effectiveness of the UN post-conflict peacebuilding activities. In this regard, we look forward to strengthen the coordination with regional and subregional organizations during the ongoing discussions on the review.

Mr. President,

The Peacebuilding Commission is increasingly convinced - and evidence from its experience confirms - that our efforts have a better chance of success if they remain people-centred. We must be learning from and guided by the experiences and needs of the people that are most affected by armed conflicts. In this context, the gender dimension of peacebuilding deserves our continuing attention and unwavering commitment. While women endure the tragic consequences of armed conflicts, they are also the main agents for societal transformation and emancipation in post-conflict societies. To this end, the Commission is exploring ways to mainstream a gender perspective in its country-specific engagement.

Mr. President,

The path to healing the scars caused by war, including through rebuilding the institutions that deliver security, justice, basic services and economic opportunities, is long and fraught with enormous challenges.. To this end, the Commission believes that by convening key development actors, the Economic and Social Council can contribute to the overarching objective of sustaining peace.

Thank you, Mr. President