

Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on Leadership, Accountability and Capacities

(7 September 2018)

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

1. On 7 September, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on “Leadership, Accountability and Capacities” to advance the Secretary-General’s recommendations in these areas in his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Ion Jinga, Chair of the PBC. The Chair opened the meeting by expressing his appreciation to the Secretary-General for his participation and the opportunity to hear of his efforts in making the UN better equipped to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts.
2. The Secretary-General expressed gratitude to the Chair and members of the PBC, recognizing this meeting as another step in implementing his recommendations on sustaining peace. He emphasized that effective, responsive and accountable leadership—supported by the right capacities and resources in support of national governments and their people—lay at the heart of his vision for sustaining peace. He underscored that UN leaders and their teams, particularly in conflict-affected settings, must navigate complex and politically sensitive environments while often operating with limited human and financial resources. He recognized the importance of prevention and the need to invest more and much earlier in peacebuilding efforts. In this context, he highlighted the vital role of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and called for Member States to scale up their contributions. He also stressed that senior United Nations leaders in the field must receive dedicated and sufficient assistance from Headquarters, including surge capacities, guidance and training. In return, they would be held accountable for bringing the UN system and its partners together around common strategies for sustaining peace. For example, in Sierra Leone, the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, together with the Resident Coordinator’s office, worked closely with national and regional partners to defuse tensions and encourage political dialogue during and after the presidential elections in March 2018. He noted the importance of effective and strategic leadership during transitions, highlighting recent experiences in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia as important test cases in ensuring the continuity of senior leadership and personnel through different phases of UN engagement, coupled with strengthened capacity of the respective UN Country Teams. He acknowledged PBC support for the development of longer term vision in national and regional contexts, as well as its role in resource mobilization for peacebuilding priorities. He noted the Commission’s bridging and convening role during the transition of UNMIL, which provided Member States a platform to discuss the mapping of capacity of the Country Team against peacebuilding priorities. He commended the PBC’s essential role as a “double hinge,” not only between the different UN bodies, such as the SC, GA and ECOSOC, bringing together peace and development perspectives from the point of view of Member States and linking the activities of the different bodies of the UN Member States, but also between Member States and UN entities on the ground, especially during transition situations, where the PBC has

promoted accountability, noted best practices, provided guidance and facilitated broader coordination with other actors, including the World Bank.

3. The Secretary-General also explained how the three strands of UN reform would further help improve leadership, accountability and capacities. He noted that the management reform would improve accountability and effectiveness of programme delivery by empowering field leadership, simplifying administrative policies, decentralizing decision-making and better aligning the responsibility for mandate implementation with the authority to manage resources. Moreover, the repositioning of the development system would ensure that a new generation of RCs and UNCTs benefit from better cross-pillar support, risk-informed joint analysis and planning, policy advice, monitoring and reporting. For instance, empowered and impartial RCs would gain multiple skills, including in integrated planning, risk management, gender issues and human rights, which would ensure more coherence across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding continuum. Although already fully integrated into the reform of the UN development system, the PBSO's role and capacity as the "hinge" would be further strengthened through integration into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs in 2019 as part of the restructuring of the peace and security pillar. He added that the PBSO could play a more substantive role in support of the work of Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), currently deployed in over 40 countries, by bringing coherence to the cross-pillar perspectives between peace and development both in HQ and the field. In order to make these efforts successful, he emphasized the significance of principled, inclusive, pragmatic and action-oriented leadership culture. He emphasized gender parity within the UN system as an absolute priority, recalling that empowering women and attaining gender parity throughout the ranks of the Organization was long-overdue. Besides it being the right thing to do, achieving gender parity will position the UN system to better support Member States in achieving inclusive and sustainable peace. He also underscored the need for fuller engagement by UN leadership with young women and men in building and sustaining peace, as recommended in the independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security.
4. Member States welcomed the opportunity to exchange views with the Secretary-General. In their interventions, they raised the following issues:
 - The majority of Member States expressed support for the new RC system and highlighted that reinvigorated RCs must be given real authority and sufficient funding in order to lead coherent and effective UNCTs.
 - Some delegations underscored the importance for the UN on the ground to work in support of national governments, whose capacities and role in development need to be strengthened.
 - Predictable, rapid and flexible financing provided by the PBF is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of UNCTs.
 - Increased contributions to the PBF called by the Secretary-General would be vital as UN reform would be futile without financing.

- The PBC could help strengthen UN leadership in the field by working strategically with RCs and UNCTs across the development-humanitarian-peace continuum in both mission and non-mission settings.
- The new RCs could help the PBC identify various needs of the host governments, provide political leverage and support Headquarters in mobilizing necessary resources and coordinating stakeholders and actors on the ground
- The PBC adds unique value by (1) acting as a forum for thematic policy discussion and convening a wide range of stakeholders, including IFIs; (2) providing a platform for discussion on country specific and regional situations that bring together RCs and leadership of UN agencies and funds from an early stage; and (3) expanding space for sharing best practices and examples on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- Expressed appreciation for the Secretary-General's focus on gender parity in the UN system. The UN system and Member States should also actively engage to improve gender parity.
- Women's leadership is vital to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Women should be seen as agents of change.
- Commitment to peacebuilding and sustaining peace must be supported by adequate training for those who are involved in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, especially when addressing specific situations of transitions from mission to non-mission settings.
