

## Peacebuilding Commission

### Ambassadorial-level meeting on Peacebuilding in Honduras

26 June 2023

#### Chair's Summary

On 26 June 2023, the Peacebuilding Commission convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on peacebuilding in Honduras. At its first engagement with the Commission, the Government of Honduras highlighted their experiences and challenges in establishing sustainable peace through electoral processes and institution-building. Representatives from the United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and civil society briefed on their initiatives on gender equality, on the human, development and peace nexus, and IADB financial support to peacebuilding in Honduras. Member States commended Honduras for sharing its successes and challenges with the Commission. They emphasized the need to address root causes of violence and ensure progress in the rule of law, and emphasized the relevancy of the Peacebuilding Fund, calling for increased support of peacebuilding activities in the country. They also welcomed the Government's dedication to establishing an impartial, independent and autonomous international mechanism against impunity and corruption.

1. On 26 June 2023, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Ivan Šimonović convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Peacebuilding in Honduras. Representatives from the government took the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges with peacebuilding in Honduras. Briefers from the UN and IFI systems as well as civil society spoke on their work and priorities for the country as well.
2. In his opening remarks, the PBC Chair commended Honduras' engagement as an expansion of the PBC's geographic scope. He underscored the importance of learning from Honduras' experience in terms of securing a peaceful environment, eradicating violence and strengthening the rule of law. He added that these efforts contribute to creating social cohesion and human rights. He particularly welcomed the sharing of perspectives from different actors involved in creating sustainable peace in Honduras.
3. Speaking on behalf of **H.E. Ms. Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras** and **H.E. Mr. Eduardo Enrique Reina García, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**, Mr. Rodolfo Pastor, Secretary of State in the Office of the President, underlined the actions and priorities of the Honduras Government for the refoundation of their country since their democratic, peaceful, and transparent election in 2021. Noting the 14th anniversary of the coup d'état, he emphasized the government's commitment to construct Honduras into a democratic-socialist state focused on preserving the rights of women and overcoming poverty and inequality. He underscored that the main priorities are sustainable development, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and consolidating peace. He highlighted the government's Solidarity Network, which recognizes the importance of responding to the country's challenges in an inclusive manner through dialogue with civil society, international bodies, and the Honduran people. He recognized that sustainable development and eradicating poverty were indispensable to avoid the reoccurrence,

prolongation, or expansion of any conflicts and noted that access to greater financial resources would allow them to fulfill these national priorities. He emphasized the importance of fighting corruption and highlighted their efforts to set up an international commission against corruption and impunity in Honduras.

4. **Mr. Julio Cesar Navarro, President Counselor of the National Electoral Council**, underlined the key conditions needed to undergo successful multiparty elections, notably improved voter identification, establishing a credible board to certify elections and ensuring equal participation of women on electoral lists, and protecting transmission of results methods. He noted in that sense that women make up the highest share of voters, which forced the country to ensure women felt politically empowered. He explained that as such, a substantial part of the budget was dedicated to capacity building measures for women. Finally, he looked ahead at the future challenges, including the general elections of 2025. He underlined that evaluating and learning from past experiences will be vital.
5. Speaking in his capacity as **Secretary of State in the Office of the President, Mr. Rodolfo Pastor** expressed concern about the serious levels of violence that afflicted Honduras, particularly women and young people, leaving them with neither access to fundamental public services nor a guarantee of their human rights. Noting inequality and poverty as the main challenges, he emphasized the importance of guaranteeing health, education, and food and energy security to effectively achieve sustainable peace and to stem the exodus of young people. He further stressed the need for a new tax system to better distribute wealth for a more equitable democracy. He highlighted significant steps taken towards rebuilding constitutionality, justice, and the rule of law through the elections of the President, National Congress, Supreme Court, Prosecutor, and Deputy Prosecutor. He urged for rebuilding the capacities of public institutions to combat organized crime. He concluded by stressing that Honduras, particularly their agricultural industry, is vulnerable to climate change, and expressed commitment to revitalizing this industry to generate new opportunity in the countryside and guarantee food security and food sovereignty.
6. **Ms. Maria Jose Jarquin, Country Representative from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)**, presented the strategy between the IADB and Honduras. She explained that the main priorities were to reduce social vulnerabilities and improve social delivery. She highlighted the negative impact of the pandemic and tropical storms on the progress of the strategy and noted weak institutional capacity in the country to mitigate impacts of poverty. She added that the partnerships of the IADB, notably with the public sector, help ensure the effectiveness of the 1.2 billion USD investments of the Bank in the country, particularly in the health, social protection and energy sectors. She commended the current Government's priority of tackling corruption and abuses of power, as the IADB supported in increasing transparency and bolstering the integrity system. Finally, she emphasized that future priorities lie in health, human security, food security and education, and will continue their housing and agricultural census plans.
7. **Ms. Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras**, celebrated Honduras's commitment to multilateralism, human rights, and sustainable development as its national plan is directly aligned to the 2030 Agenda. She affirmed the participatory, transparent, and

peaceful elections of 2021 as a sign that the Honduran people want change for a society where social and human rights agendas as well as economic development and public investments are central. She advised that such change would require effective, strong dialogue and reconciliation across different political forces, particularly following the 2009 coup d'état and that a new social contract is needed. While commending the Honduran government's commitment to gender equality and advancing sexual and reproductive rights she recognized that femicides rates are very high and that conservative social norms and movements make a very difficult environment to advance on key legislation. She highlighted the triple nexus between development, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding as central to addressing Honduran reality and underscored the need to think innovatively in this space, particularly on food security and nutrition as well as human mobility. She noted that despite previous setbacks and current challenges, Honduras has an opportunity to change its narrative focusing on what works as well as ongoing processes such as the election of a new Supreme Court, the current elections for a new Attorney General, and the conversations surrounding a possible international, independent, autonomous mechanism against corruption and impunity. Finally, she strongly welcomed the Honduran government's cooperation with the UN country team under the new UN cooperation framework and the humanitarian response plan.

8. **Ms. Suyapa Martinez, Co-Director of the Women's Study Center (CEM-H)**, noted the particular vulnerabilities that women face and have faced in Honduras during the dictatorship and due to the pandemic, tropical storms and criminal groups, emphasizing the weak institutional protection of women and girls. She underscored the high discrepancy in femicide rates and the rates of prosecution and conviction of these crimes. She added that sexual violence is also an important issue in the country, particularly when it comes to minors. She called for the Government to pass key legislation in Congress to protect women's rights and promote education to women. She recognized the progress already made to protect women and girls in humanitarian and crisis situations and to create government institutions for women's issue with accompanied budgets. She, however, noted these need to be further operationalized and dialogue.
9. **Director of the Americas Division in the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), Ms. Laura Flores**, speaking on behalf of Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, commended the successful 2021 elections and noted the importance of supporting national efforts to strengthen inclusive and transparent institutions, fostering participation of civil society, and promoting citizen participation. She expressed solidarity with Honduras after the recent tragic and violent events, particularly noting the terrible incident in the women's prison in Támara and underscored the UN's commitment to working with the Government to undertake the necessary reforms to address the root causes of conflict and sustain peace in an inclusive manner. Recognizing the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)'s contributions to Honduras already, she highlighted three areas to deepen this collaboration: (1) strengthening national capacities to prevent and manage conflicts; (2) strengthening national protection mechanisms for citizen participation, particularly that of women, youth, and other underrepresented groups; and (3) continuing to enhance human rights protections and access to justice. She welcomed the efforts made to create an independent, impartial, and autonomous

international mechanism against corruption and impunity. She encouraged Honduras to remain engaged with the PBC.

10. Member states welcomed the briefings and made the following remarks:

- They welcomed the engagement of the Government of Honduras with the PBC and the utilization of its convening platform to share their experiences and lessons learned.
- They commended Honduras for their peaceful, transparent and inclusive election process in 2021, which led to the election of its first female president. They noted that this successful process was very important in rebuilding trust with the Honduran people.
- They underscored the need to address corruption and encouraged the Government to continue with its plan to establish an International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity, recognizing the importance of this innovative idea.
- They urged for further strengthening of democracy, rule of law, public administration, citizen security, social service delivery, gender sensitive policy, the rule of law and the full protection of human rights.
- They recognized the process of the refoundation of the country and that this is accompanied by a new social contract with focus on human rights and economic inclusion.
- They recommended the work of the RC and UNCT in supporting the government and working closely with a variety of actors at national and local levels
- They stressed the need for continued international support to Honduras, notably referring to the initiatives supported by the Peacebuilding Fund and calling for its full deployment as well as the UN Cooperation framework (2022-2026) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (2023)
- They called the government to support civic space and the important role of the civil society organization as well as the establishment of a consultative platform with women's organizations to advance the gender equality agenda.

11. In response to the interventions on the floor, briefers stressed the need for international cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels, to improve public policy, to develop measures for human rights, and to root out corruption. They urged for a strong and independent assessment of the country's capacity and needs in order to establish the International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity. They highlighted the catalyzing effect that peacebuilding initiatives must have on further implementing measures to protect and empower women and other vulnerable groups.

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

- Encourage Honduras to continue engaging and sharing its experiences with the PBC and to reach out to other countries for exchanges and south-south cooperation.
- Call for the further enhancement of human rights protection mechanism and enforcement of the rule of law.
- Continue to support the process for the establishment of a possible International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity.
- Advocate for further PBF engagement in Honduras, with a particular emphasis on promoting inclusive societies that protect women and young people and as part of the UN Cooperation Framework with focus at national and local level.

- Recommend that a follow up meeting is convened in Honduras around the collaboration of the Government with civil society around civic space and a common agenda for the country.
- Support the Government in establishing a consultative platform with women's organizations to advance the gender equality agenda.
- Encourage the UN system and Government to work together on a conflict prevention and peace building strategy (with focus on Indigenous, afro-descendants and women) and reconvene a meeting in Honduras on the same in 2024 one year before the next general elections at end 2025.