

Draft Statement by the PBC
Security Council Open Debate
**Humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace
and security**

17 September 2020

- I would like to congratulate Niger on its presidency of the Security Council this month and for organizing this debate.
- I would like to bring to your attention, in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, observations and recommendations by the Commission in the context of different regions under its consideration, including the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel, and the Pacific Islands.
- In a number of contexts where the PBC has been engaged, environment- and climate-related challenges were considered as factors that could have a negative impact on peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. Addressing these challenges country-specific or regional contexts can therefore also contribute to peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. In numerous past interactions, national actors have highlighted that building climate resilience can also be seen as conducive to peacebuilding.
- Just last week, during a PBC meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding in the Lake Chad Basin, briefers and stakeholders from the region painted a vivid picture of the multidimensional challenges facing the Lake Chad region, particularly regarding security, humanitarian and development issues accompanied by environmental change and degradation, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As in previous PBC discussions, during last week's meeting a number of speakers emphasized the importance of helping to mitigate tensions and address disputes between herders and farmers, which in the Lake Chad Basin have been exacerbated by environmental degradation. It has become clear that, in the Lake Chad Basin, initiatives that aim to support national and local actors to improve management of cross-border transhumance by building resilience to climate change and environmental degradation and strengthening community engagement

remain critical to overall efforts to implement the Regional Stabilization Strategy and require continuous support.

- The complex challenges in the Lake Chad Basin are particularly affecting women and girls. Lack of access to fundamental social protection, such as basic health and education services, environmental degradation could hinder women's livelihoods and exacerbate their vulnerability, a situation that is now further complicated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dangerous challenges facing women and girls in the sub-region, where they are over-represented in the informal sector and less likely to benefit from COVID-19 recovery programmes, should not be underestimated. For this reason, it is important to ensure women's equal access to education, health care, and decent work, strengthen their role in sustainable development, and ensure their full, effective and meaningful participation in the pandemic response as well as in political and decision-making processes.
- In numerous PBC engagements in support of the Sahel, representatives from affected states have highlighted the need for further support to address the combined effects of land degradation, reduced and erratic rainfall, and lack of sufficient funding for sound environmental and development policies, all of which complicate national and regional efforts to manage natural resources effectively and to ensure resilient pastoralism.
- In a recent PBC meeting on the Pacific Islands, representatives of the region warned about the impacts of sea level rise, increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and storms, ocean acidification and consequent damage to coral reefs and fisheries – with devastating effects for peoples' safety and livelihoods. Many governments within the Pacific region have requested additional support from the international community to address these issues. This has become an urgent request at a time when the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, including by negatively affecting food security through supply chain disruption.
- As outlined during the ongoing 2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and in the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, issued last Friday, we cannot overstate the need for

coordinated efforts among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors in accordance with their respective responsibilities and mandates. This was always true and is even more true in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In regions such as the Lake Chad Basin, a collective and coordinated effort by Member States, international, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and, where relevant, the private sector, is required to fully realize the AU/LCBC strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas.

- As we seek collectively to build stronger and more resilient societies in the face of environmental challenges and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our efforts will be jeopardized without adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding, humanitarian and development efforts respectively.
- This is the time to stand by the side of the governments and people whose lives and livelihoods could be challenged by climate change and environmental degradation. We need to support collective action, guided by ambitious mitigation and adaptation strategies, based on the best available science, and to promote local resilience, in accordance with nationally-defined development priorities.
- We must also bear in mind that the conditions that may lead to peace or conflict are complex by their nature and specific to each situation. Hence, an in-depth, country- and region-specific understanding of the various social, economic and cultural variables at play in their unique specificities is required. The analysis of the root causes of a conflict is a comprehensive exercise. We must recognize that each individual armed conflict has its own specific underlying causes and that no “one-size-fits-all” formula applies when it comes to building and sustaining peace.
- The PBC will therefore continue to improve its convening, bridging and advisory role to sustain international assistance in support of national peacebuilding priorities.