

## Peacebuilding Commission

### Ambassadorial-level meeting on Indigenous Peoples, Peace and Reconciliation in Canada, Colombia and Norway

19 June 2023

#### Chair's Summary

##### **Executive summary**

On 19 June, the PBC convened a meeting on Indigenous Peoples, Peace and Reconciliation in Canada, Colombia and Norway. This multi-country engagement allowed the PBC to engage with and discuss with Member States and representatives of Indigenous communities that shared their own experiences in addressing Indigenous issues, reconciliation and promoting Indigenous voices. Briefers from the three countries noted the particular discrimination and marginalization faced by Indigenous communities, and what can and has been done to reduce violence and ensure inclusive peacebuilding in consideration of Indigenous rights. Participants particularly underscored the importance of establishing truth and remembering the past through transitional justice processes and as part of successful reconciliation. These serve in the interest of preserving and guaranteeing Indigenous socio-cultural, economic and political rights. Member States further expressed their support in continuing engaging on Indigenous issues.

1. On 19 June 2023, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Ivan Šimonović convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Indigenous Peoples, Peace and Reconciliation in Canada, Colombia and Norway. Representatives of Indigenous communities focused on sharing good practices and challenges of peace and reconciliation processes involving Indigenous Peoples and promoting the voices of Indigenous peacebuilders.
2. In his opening remarks, the PBC Chair underscored the historical discrimination and marginalization faced by Indigenous populations. He added that many of the disputes involving Indigenous Peoples are related to economic interests over their lands and resources or over their right to self-determination. He emphasized that these conflicts are drivers of poverty and displacement within Indigenous Peoples, further harming the exceptional cultural, social, political and economic characteristics of these communities. He noted that they also render women and youth particularly vulnerable. He called for particular attention to preserving the rights and guaranteeing the human rights of Indigenous Peoples for sustaining peace and redressing past mistakes, recognizing the universality of peacebuilding.
3. **Mr. Dario Mejia Montalvo, Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)**, highlighted the importance of Indigenous Peoples' participation in peacebuilding efforts. He emphasized that Indigenous Peoples should be seen as those who possess integral knowledge and rights, including territorial and cultural rights, and that their participation should be direct, differentiated, and specific. While highlighting that Indigenous Peoples are direct victims of forced displacements, massacres, and genocides, he noted with concern that children and women are often more vulnerable. He then expressed the importance of Indigenous legal systems, recommending that there be dialogue between a country's formal justice system and the justice system of Indigenous Peoples. He stressed that the UN act

urgently on issues surrounding Indigenous Peoples, whose vulnerability will increase with climate change. Finally, he welcomed the work of the PBC and indicated readiness of the UNPFII to work together.

- 4. Mr. Donald Nicholls, Director of the Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services (Canada),** expressed reconciliation as establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. He highlighted the importance of being aware of the past, acknowledging harms and acting towards change for successful reconciliation, reminding that it must be a long-term process. He noted the role Indigenous communities can have in advocating for reconciliation and acting as stakeholders and rights holders in the development of legal frameworks and in their implementation, at the international, national and local levels. He then underlined the importance of coordination and follow-up, and that implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are followed through, with independent, appropriately funded and transparent oversight. He further highlighted local Cree initiatives, such as community dialogue and mediation to heal from intergeneration trauma. Finally, he called for the PBC to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations of commissions and international obligations, require reporting and provide training on best practices for peacebuilding and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
- 5. Ms. Lizbeth Bastidas, Deputy Director for Collective Reparation at the Victims' Unit (Colombia),** recalled the history of struggle and resistance of Indigenous Peoples, particularly that of Indigenous women who have ensured that the acknowledgement of this history continues today. She further noted how festivals, such as the Forgiveness Festival, helped create processes of celebrating life, forgiving each other, and starting over. In this vein, she highlighted how the processes of resistance resulted in legislation that recognized Indigenous People's struggles and provided reparations for victims. This included Victims Law 1448, which established a set of judicial, administrative, social, economic, individual, and collective measures for the benefit of victims, and the Final Peace Agreement in 2016, to which Indigenous Peoples provided input to create an ethnic chapter. Through this, she noted that they provided reparations at both individual and collective levels, which allows recognition of harms done to specific communities, including particular ethnic groups. She explained that the work of the Victims' Unit guaranteed a broad and pluralistic processes of participation for the victims, which furthers their commitment towards achieving total peace and reconciliation.
- 6. Ms. Marit Myrvoll, Sami social anthropologist and member of the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission,** noted the destructive extent of assimilation policies, targeting languages, culture and world views and leading to hate speech and violence. In this regard, she commended the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate and bring forwards recommendations for reconciliation, leading to historical apologies and relevant legislation. However, she emphasized that an implementation gap still remains, between the policies in place and their local implementation, regarding the protection of natural resources on land and sea but also on the delivery of welfare. She called for sustained and long-term efforts in addressing subsequent recommendations of the Commission for reconciliation, notably in terms of language, culture and prevention of conflicts.

7. **Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support**, noted the strong relevance of this topic to the UN's peacebuilding agenda while also emphasizing the universality of prevention and peacebuilding. While commending the encouraging progress made in Canada, Colombia, and Norway, she stressed that there is still a gap between the normative standards for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights and their actual implementation and enforcement. She expressed concern that Indigenous Peoples continue to be marginalized through systematic discrimination, political exclusion, and limited access to justice. She underscored that Indigenous Peoples, including tribal leaders, women, and youth, have much to contribute and should be meaningfully included in efforts of conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. While expressing the need for the UN to strengthen its understanding of Indigenous issues, she also highlighted the work of DPPA and PBSO in supporting Indigenous Peoples, such as through PBF projects in Guatemala and Honduras.
8. Member states welcomed the briefings and made the following remarks:
  - Underscored the importance the roles of transitional justice and Truth Commissions can play in regaining trust, recognizing Indigenous historical narratives, addressing past grievances and seeking guarantees of non-repetition.
  - Recognized the exclusion and marginalization faced by Indigenous communities, leading to violence and exacerbating poverty and displacement amongst Indigenous Peoples.
  - Further noted that Indigenous women and youth face particular socio-economic challenges and discrimination leading to being disproportionately vulnerable to violence.
  - Highlighted the need to safeguard Indigenous cultures and promote the development of their ways of life, preserving their economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental rights, recognizing the importance of educating Indigenous youth to achieve this goal.
  - Emphasized the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the importance of ensuring their participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes as knowledge and rights holders, and as such noting the universality of peacebuilding.
  - Underlined the importance of establishing and implementing strong legal frameworks and robust legislation to protect Indigenous Peoples and ensure the recommendations of Truth Commissions are followed-up on.
9. In response to the interventions on the floor, briefers once again urged for representation in conversations regarding climate change, environmental protection and conversation. They further expressed the importance of compensation as a symbolic recognition of Indigenous narratives and the harms faced by Indigenous communities. They reaffirmed that the PBC is an ideal forum for Indigenous Peoples and Member States to discuss Indigenous peacebuilding lessons and challenges.

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

- Ensure the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples as equal participants in peacebuilding and decision-making processes;
- Address historical injustices inflicted to Indigenous Peoples, including through discrimination and marginalization;
- Follow-up on the full implementation of Truth Commissions' recommendations;
- Encourage continued learning from Indigenous Peoples on all issues, especially those concerning climate change, environmental protection, and resources;

- Encourage the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to continue engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission, including through the engagement of Indigenous youth.