

Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on Burkina Faso

8 October 2020

Chair's Summary

1. On 8 October, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Burkina Faso. The meeting was held on a virtual platform and chaired by H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, Chair of the PBC. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the immediate and long-term socio-economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in Burkina Faso, with the aim of mobilising support for the immediate response and for the post COVID-19 recovery efforts, and to help address the impact of COVID-19 on ongoing processes and activities related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the last PBC meeting on Burkina Faso held on 5 March 2020, during which the government of Burkina Faso presented its peacebuilding priorities as articulated in the Priority Action Matrix of the Emergency Program for the Sahel (MAP-PUS) and after which the Chair worked with the government to ensure that the commitments expressed by many participants were translated into concrete support for the implementation of the Priority Actions. The Chair confirmed that the PBC would continue to provide a platform for mobilizing support for the peacebuilding priorities of Burkina Faso, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. H.E. Mr. Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré, Prime Minister of Burkina Faso, updated the Commission on the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had exacerbated security, humanitarian and development challenges at a time when Burkina Faso was preparing for presidential and legislative elections on 22 November 2020. The pandemic had resulted in a decrease of expected growth rate from 6.3% to 2% and a fall in public revenue estimated at over \$550 million, translating into a budget deficit of 5%. The government of Burkina Faso had developed a national pandemic crisis response plan, with a total cost of \$889 million, aimed at implementing a coherent and holistic national response and to ensure strategic management of the multidimensional crisis that the country was facing. The Prime Minister highlighted that the national pandemic crisis response plan complemented existing programs, including the MAP-PUS presented during the PBC meeting of 5 March 2020. He outlined the following priority areas in need of attention to address the country's multidimensional challenges: i) accelerating an integrated approach to security while at the same time creating budget margins to respond to urgent economic and social development needs; ii) adding value to local raw materials by investing in local production of commercial products; iii) investing in human capital, particularly in technical and professional trainings and in technology platforms for healthcare; and iv) accelerating digitalization of the economy in order to increase productivity. The Prime Minister was complemented by H.E. Ms. Pauline Zoure, Minister

Delegate to the Minister of Economy, Finance and Development of Burkina Faso, in charge of Regional Planning, and Dr. Dorcas Tiendrebeogo, Executive Director of the Fund for Women's Income Generating Activities. The Minister Delegate to the Minister of Economy, Finance and Development noted increased difficulties in mobilizing resources in the context of the pandemic, while highlighting the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) as an important source of support in face of the pandemic and security, development, social, economic and humanitarian challenges. The Executive Director of the Fund for Women's Income Generating Activities stressed the value of loans in supporting women's income generating activities during the pandemic and informed the Commission that the Fund had already provided loans to 200,000 women, while also lowering interest rates from 10% to 3%.

4. Ms. Agnes Bado, Chair of the National Union of Women Entrepreneurs, underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic had severely impacted women's place in the economy, including in the tourism and service sectors as well as through decreased remittances. She called for continued international support to the government to ensure continuity of ongoing efforts and stressed the centrality of applying a gender lens to all response efforts. She particularly highlighted the limited access to credit for women and underlined that dedicated financial instruments must be made available to women entrepreneurs. In addition, she noted that the combination of the security situation, the continuing terrorist threat and the COVID-19 pandemic had created a precarious situation that called for a coordinated and gender-sensitive response focused at the local level.
5. Ms. Giovannie Biha, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, underlined that Burkina Faso was facing a triple crisis of insecurity, growing humanitarian needs and the impact of COVID-19 containment measures, which were all eroding social cohesion. She commended the government for taking measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to the complex set of pre-existing challenges, for which the pandemic had been an aggravating factor. She stressed that humanitarian assistance remained crucial as the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had reached over 1 million and 3.3 million people were living in food insecurity. She urged national authorities and international partners to focus economic response on community and local levels, with special attention to women, children and youth. The DSRSG informed the Commission that the UN Country Team had continued to reinforce field presence in the context of the pandemic, while also facilitating emergency assistance to fragile zones and vulnerable populations. Burkina Faso was among the first countries to receive assistance from the Central Emergency Response Fund and was also part of the Global COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan. In addition, the UN Country Team was supporting the government in assessing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. On the upcoming elections, the DSRSG stressed that the electoral process represented a litmus test in terms of consolidating democratic principles. In this regard, she commended the authorities for sustaining political dialogue and creating conditions for a

transparent and inclusive process. She underscored that UNOWAS would continue to engage with key actors ahead of the elections, including through a visit to Burkina Faso by the SRSG in the coming days. In conclusion, she urged the Commission to continue being a steadfast partner to Burkina Faso beyond the upcoming elections to consolidate peacebuilding gains and address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the long-term.

6. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, recalled that previous PBC discussions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Secretary-General's 2020 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, had underlined the need for integrated approaches that bring together humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. He stressed that this was especially true in Burkina Faso, where coordinated international efforts in support of the country's development and peacebuilding priorities were needed more than ever, and stressed the central role that the PBC could play in this regard. He updated the Commission on adjustments made to integrate the challenges of COVID-19 in the current PBF portfolio of \$14.7 million, focusing on social cohesion, prevention of violent extremism, building confidence between local authorities and local population, transhumance and prevention of agro-pastoralist conflicts. He further highlighted the UN's successful partnership with the World Bank and other multilateral institutions in Burkina Faso through the Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment (PPBA), which had recently launched its second phase with a conflict analysis aimed at introducing a conflict-sensitive approach to the next National Development Plan, and encouraged further collaboration on data and joint analysis to better understand the impact of the pandemic on social cohesion.

7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They expressed deep concern over the additional challenges posed by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for Burkina Faso, particularly on the most vulnerable populations. They noted that the pandemic had exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, including the situation of women, whose trading and domestic activities had been negatively impacted, and of local communities.
- They congratulated the government of Burkina Faso for its continuous efforts, with regional and international support, to address the security situation and its humanitarian and socio-economic consequences, and for the additional actions taken to minimize the economic and social shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen the resilience of the government and the population in connection with the pandemic, including the national pandemic crisis response plan.
- They welcomed the on-going preparations for the general elections of 22 November 2020 and efforts to address the specific challenges posed by the security situation and

the pandemic in this context, while reiterating the need to look beyond the elections and accompany Burkina Faso to consolidate peacebuilding gains and address root causes of conflict in the long-term. They emphasized that the PBC would continue to provide a platform in this regard.

- They underscored the need for a multidimensional and coordinated approach to the entire region, noting that many of the interrelated challenges were cross-border in nature. They welcomed the on-going catalytic support provided by the PBF to critical peacebuilding activities in Burkina Faso, particularly highlighting its role in trust building measures between the authorities and the population.
 - They stressed the critical role of women in COVID-19 response efforts and the need to consolidate gains made in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, while also emphasizing the importance of strengthening youth engagement.
 - They welcomed the Chair's follow-up of the commitments made during the PBC meeting of 5 March 2020, during which the government presented its peacebuilding priorities as identified through the PPBA and articulated in the MAP-PUS. They encouraged Burkina Faso's partners to sustain their support to these priority actions and to consider additional support to help the country's immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery plan.
8. In his closing remarks, H.E. Mr. Yemdaogo Eric Tiare, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso, noted that the many high-level government representatives of Burkina Faso who had briefed the PBC since 2019 reflected the confidence that Burkina Faso placed in the PBC as a platform to mobilize support for its peacebuilding priorities. He thanked the Chair for facilitating successful follow-up of the PBC meeting of 5 March 2020 and expressed his hope that the commitments expressed during today's meeting would similarly be translated into concrete support.
9. The Chair reiterated the Commission's commitment to continue accompanying Burkina Faso on its path toward peacebuilding and sustaining peace and in its COVID-19 response efforts, including by providing a platform for promoting coherence, mobilizing support and exchanging lessons learned.