

## **Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission**

### **“Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic”**

**Wednesday, 15 December 2021**

#### **Informal Summary**

1. The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), H.E. Mr. Collen V. Kelapile (Botswana), and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Osama Abdelkhalek (Egypt), co-chaired the annual joint meeting of the ECOSOC and the PBC on “*Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic*” on 15 December 2021. Member States, UN entities, as well as other stakeholders attended the meeting. In addition to the opening remarks by the ECOSOC President and the PBC Chair, the Deputy Secretary-General delivered the keynote address. This was followed by pre-recorded briefings by the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Managing Director of Operations of the World Bank, and virtual briefings by the Director of “La Femme Rurale” in Mali, the Co-founder of “Get Up and Go Colombia” in Colombia and the Managing Director of Equity BCDC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The meeting focused on responses to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in countries recovering from conflicts and emergencies and reiterated the call for global solidarity in boosting support for a conflict-sensitive socio-economic recovery.

#### **Responses to COVID-19 pandemic and beyond**

2. In his opening remarks, the President of the ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, stressed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the poorest and most vulnerable countries are at heightened risk of social and economic collapse. The resurgence of COVID-19 underscores the need for continued vigilance and preparedness, particularly in conflict-affected countries. The President noted that structural racism and entrenched patterns of discrimination have led minority and indigenous populations to bear the worst effects of the pandemic, adding to historic grievances. Lack of access to vaccines and of fiscal capacity to cushion the socio-economic impact of the pandemic have served to fuel mistrust, new grievances and forced migration. He called for global solidarity, including debt relief and financing of health systems and social protection measures in conflict-affected countries. The President also underscored the importance of addressing food insecurity and protecting the planet while building back better. The focus should be on women and youth. He concluded that it is in conflict-affected countries where the success of the SDGs will be determined. This is why a conflict-sensitive COVID-19 recovery remains urgent and the need for the entire UN system, including the ECOSOC and the PBC, to deliver integrated, durable and innovative solutions to address the multidimensional challenges.

3. The Chair of the PBC, H.E. Mr. Osama Abdelkhalek, noted that the 2020 twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace acknowledged the devastating impact of COVID-19 on conflict-affected countries. He called for reinvigorated, effective and equitable multilateralism that ensures that countries affected by conflict are not left behind and development and peacebuilding gains are not reversed. He underscored the need for governments to build responsive institutions and inclusive governance in order to switch from a response-oriented system to a nationally led

prevention system. He recalled that only 18% of conflict affected countries were on track to meet the SDG targets and stressed the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, supporting implementation of the SDGs and aligning international support with national development and peacebuilding priorities. Referring to the 2021 “Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development,” he underscored partnerships for more impactful peacebuilding and sustainable development. In this context, the Chair reiterated that financing was the most critical challenge facing the UN in pursuing peacebuilding and SDG objectives, with COVID-19 creating new pressures on already scant resources. He expressed confidence that action-oriented results can be achieved in the upcoming high-level GA meeting on financing for peacebuilding in April 2022. Finally, the Chair called for an informal coordinator to strengthen relations between ECOSOC and the PBC and encouraged concurrent members of the ECOSOC and the PBC to take on this role.

4. The Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, underscored the importance of a sustainable recovery from the pandemic while scaling up the integrated response to the multidimensional challenges of climate change, rising poverty and hunger, and persistent conflicts. To change the current global trajectory, promote coherence, and support national efforts to build resilience, the UN system, including ECOSOC and the PBC, Resident Coordinator Offices and political and peace missions, had a critical role. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted three important steps around promoting durable peace and sustainable development. First, to achieve the 2030 Agenda, which is the foundation for sustainable development and peace, action must be accelerated. Second, she recognized that the broken financial architecture for prevention needs to be shifted towards a funding architecture that incentivizes collaboration. For this, three UN instruments can be helpful: the Peacebuilding Fund, the Joint SDG Fund and the CERF. Third, women peacebuilders must be included in the process of achieving peace which makes it also necessary to reassess core assumptions on how peace and security are shaped and negotiated. She added that Our Common Agenda foresees an expanded role for the PBC in integrating peacebuilding into recovery efforts; and in reshaping UN responses to multidimensional threats to development, peace and security. It also places a heightened burden of expectation on the ECOSOC as it leads in coordinating multilateral responses to sustainable development.

#### **Taking stock and promoting conflict-sensitive recovery while leaving no one behind**

5. The Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Ms. Antoinette Sayeh, said that fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) represent more than 20% of the IMF’s membership. They have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, which exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. Their real GDP contracted by 6.6 per cent and public debt increased by 12.6 percentage points of GDP in 2020; inflation forecasted to increase by 10 percentage points in 2021 and food prices hit a ten-year high by November 2021. She noted that the Fund had invested \$7.5 billion in emergency support to fragile states since the pandemic started. Out of the recent allocation of Special Drawing Rights, \$16.2 billion went to FCS, with many countries using the funds for vaccines and other measures to respond to the pandemic. In addition to extending support to build strong and accountable national economic institutions and strengthen capacity building, work was underway to develop a new FCS Strategy. The Strategy will articulate how the IMF’s core competencies and instruments, in close collaboration with partners, can be leveraged to help countries across the fragility and conflict spectrum.

6. The World Bank Managing Director of Operations, Mr. Axel van Trotsenburg, reiterated the Bank’s commitment to work closely with the UN and other international organizations in order

to stabilize fragile countries. The International Development Assistance (IDA) replenishment reflects the concern about fragility and 30% of the resources would be directed to fragile countries. He called for multiple initiatives to ensure equitable vaccine distribution and noted that the Bank would provide up to 20 billion dollars for this cause. He underscored the importance of focusing on preparedness and helping fragile states to grow their economies. He cited Afghanistan as one of many examples where the international community needed to urgently address growing food insecurity and economic collapse.

7. The Director of “La Femme Rurale”, Ms. Sirebara Fatoumata Diallo, pointed out that overcoming the socio-economic disparities exacerbated by the pandemic is only possible if all stakeholders are involved in the process, particularly women. She highlighted the importance of involving women in the recovery process, including through inter-community dialogue. However, in conflict and transition situations, mobilization of communities to better respond to the pandemic and conduct activities related to peace and conflict prevention is made difficult by the context of insecurity. The Government in Mali had reduced the tax burdens for companies, and increased funding for the sector that is most affected by the crisis and supported households by, for example, covering their electricity costs for a period of three months. Three pillars of resilience must be at center of action right now: securing livelihoods and improving social protection of vulnerable communities, sustainably strengthening the food sector, and supporting efforts to strengthen governance.

8. The Managing Director of Equity BCDC and Vice-Chair of Board of the UN Global Compact Network of the DRC, Mr. Celestin Mukeba Muntuabu, highlighted some of the impacts of COVID-19, including on jobs, food supply, and trade and subsistence activities. He highlighted a number of policies put in place by his company to address the crisis in his country and in neighbouring countries where the Bank lends, namely providing credit over a multiyear period with a focus on food and agriculture value chains, trade and manufacturing and stimulation of regional trade. The vision is to ultimately lift the development prospects of the region through effective financial support to the private sector, taking pressure off public financing and to expand agricultural and industrial production with a view to creating 25 million decent jobs.

9. The Co-founder of “Get Up and Go Colombia”, Ms. Luisa Romero, addressed the wounds and problems that still needed to be resolved after 50 years of conflict in Colombia. Her organization “Get Up and Go Colombia” aimed to transform former war-torn territories into cultural and touristic destinations and empowering affected communities by building capacities on topics like sustainable tourism and social entrepreneurship. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization adapted its programme and offered virtual tours as a tool for peacebuilding and socioeconomic development. She emphasized that the development of innovative solutions are best undertaken by those directly affected by conflict. For this reason, it is important to empower civil society to contribute to SDG 16 on inclusive and peaceful societies. This will require adequate financing and support for grassroots organizations, especially those led by young people, which offer opportunities to develop effective solutions and build sustainable peace while including everyone.

### **Interventions from the floor**

10. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations and recommendations:

- Welcoming the ongoing collaboration between ECOSOC and the PBC, Member States called for further enhancing the partnership, within their respective mandates, while recognizing that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.
- Countries expressed concern about the continued negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine inequity, rising poverty, food insecurity, persistent conflicts, terrorism, and climate change on implementing Agenda 2030 that remains the blue-print to build back better. They emphasized that the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment must be addressed in all peace and development efforts supported by the United Nations through people-centered and nationally-led prevention approaches.
- Member States stressed the importance of building effective, accountable, inclusive and responsive institutions at the national and local levels, with a focus on promoting good governance and whole-of-society approaches. They underscored the full and meaningful participation of civil society, women and youth in achieving durable peace and sustainable development.
- Countries highlighted the importance of prioritizing social safety net programs, improving public health infrastructure and adding social protection systems into country development cooperation strategies, supported by the United Nations.
- Member States underscored the need to take into account the unique local circumstances of fragile states and called for local solutions that include local peacebuilders, and regional and subregional organizations. They emphasized partnerships between the relevant stakeholders and advocated for strengthening regional and South-South and triangular cooperation.
- Countries called to especially support capacity building in fragile countries and strengthen supply chains in order to prevent conflict. Several advocated that Small Island Developing States (SIDS), affected by multiple crises like climate disasters, economic difficulties and the pandemic, should receive special support to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Some also called for the bridging of the digital divide that has become more obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The New Agenda for Peace, a key aspect of Our Common Agenda outlined by the Secretary-General, was highlighted by many Member States as a road map to more impactful peacebuilding.
- Recognizing that peacebuilding and sustainable development need adequate, predictable and sustainable financing, Member States called for greater complementarity between and additional resources to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund; the Joint SDG Fund; and CERF, and emphasized that the United Nations and the international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the IMF, should strengthen their collaboration and complement each other in their tasks and provision of financial help to fragile states. Some underlined the importance of access to assessed contributions as central to realizing adequate, predictable and sustained funding. While advocating for broadening the sources of financing, they noted that the traditional funding sources must finance not only the recovery from COVID-19 with emergency financing facilities, debt relief and concessional financing, but also fund long-term economic growth. Some also suggested the involvement of more non-traditional donors and the establishment of a new collaborative with investors, donors, local communities, and the

United Nations. One speaker expressed caution against the intermingling of peace and development funding.

- Member States reiterated their commitment to multilateralism and to further solidify collaboration and coordination between ECOSOC and the PBC to promote vaccine equity, mitigate the impact of Covid-19, ensure protection of hard-won gains in peacebuilding and development, and accelerate achievement of the SDGs. This was echoed in the ECOSOC-PBC [joint statement](#) issued after the meeting. In this context, many welcomed the proposal of having an Informal Coordinator designated to be the bridge between the two bodies and meeting more frequently in order to advance a coherent approach to peacebuilding and development.