

**PBC Ambassadorial meeting on Gender Responsive Social Protection Systems and Access to Public Services in Peacebuilding Contexts: Connecting local women's perspectives with global policies and priorities"**

**20 March 2019**

**Chairperson's summary of the Discussion**

1. On 20 March 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on the side of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) on "Gender Responsive Social Protection Systems and Access to Public Services in Peacebuilding Contexts: Connecting local women's perspectives with global policies and priorities". The meeting was chaired by H.E Mr. Guillermo Fernandez de Soto, Chair of the PBC.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair highlighted the commitment of the PBC to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and the importance of integrating gender into peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The Chair thanked PBSO and UN Women for their support in developing the PBC's gender strategy, and expressed his commitment to ensuring progress in the strategy's implementation in 2019. The Chair noted the importance of bringing gender-focused perspectives into strategies to improve social protection, public services, and infrastructure in peacebuilding contexts, given that lack of access and inequality disproportionately impact women, particularly in conflict-affected settings.
3. **H.E. Ms. Alice Johnson-Howard, Deputy Minister of Gender of Liberia** recalled Liberia's recovery from conflict and the successful transfer of security responsibility to the Government of Liberia since the closure of UNMIL in March 2018. She highlighted legislative and political initiatives launched by the Government to promote social cohesion through increased participation of women in all spheres of life, including the security sector. These initiatives included the second phase of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the National Gender Policy and the Liberia Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development plan which is gender-sensitive and establishes a roadmap towards reconciliation. Ms. Johnson-Howard stressed that national reform processes related to justice and social security, land rights, local government decentralization and civil service reforms set the pace for women's full protection and participation by promoting gender equality and addressing specific challenges. One of these challenges was insecurity caused by gender-based violence, which will be addressed by a Domestic Violence Bill due to be passed by the national legislature. She noted that the Government of Liberia was further supporting efforts to launch gender responsive planning processes across agencies and commissions.
4. **H.E. Ms. Rachel W. Shebesh, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Public Service, Youth & Gender Affairs of Kenya** underscored that lack of access to services can be a cause of conflict, and that addressing gaps requires women's participation in both planning and

decision making processes. In this connection, she briefed on the efforts and initiatives of the Government of Kenya to strengthen women's empowerment, participation and leadership. Women in Kenya are encouraged to participate in the design of reforms including those in the education sector, security sector, national conflict early warning and early response systems and in formulating policies and strategies to reduce inequality. Recently, the President of Kenya issued an executive order related to coordination and implementation of national government security programmes that included training on conflict mediation at the grassroots level. As a result of this initiative, a total of 200 women were trained as mediators and are active across 34 conflict-affected counties. .

5. **Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women** explained the connection between the theme of CSW63 and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including how social protection systems can create and contribute to inclusiveness in societies. Ms. Regner highlighted that, despite what is known about the positive impact of women's participation in peacebuilding, women are still often excluded from negotiation and decision-making processes. She stressed that societies gain when women are part of peacebuilding processes, and that they have the right and should be given the space to participate meaningfully. Ms. Regner also stressed that the gender-biased design of social protection strategies can push women back into traditional and conservative roles. She praised the PBF minimum funding targets for gender programming as a good practice in support of gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
6. **Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head, Peacebuilding Support Office** emphasized the importance of inclusivity and the vital role women and youth play in building and sustaining peace. She stressed the important role the PBC gender strategy is intended to play in integrating gender perspectives throughout the Commission's work, and in highlighting the link between successful peacebuilding and gender equality and women's empowerment. Ms. Freeman provided examples of PBF-supported activities to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives linked to social protection and service delivery, including in Liberia; Papua New Guinea and Kyrgyzstan.
7. **Ms. Oulimata Sarr, UN Women Regional Director, a.i. for West and Central Africa** discussed the challenges confronting women in the Sahel, a region at the epicentre of violent extremism and climate change. She explained that programs supported by UN Women in the Sahel region are based on the premise that the biggest threat to peace is poverty. In this regard, she noted that CSW63 provides an opportunity for Member States and civil society organizations to share good practices and lessons learned on social protection initiatives, including cash transfers to vulnerable women. Ms. Sarr used as an example a program supported by UN Women in Mali, "Women Economic Empowerment through Climate Resilient Agriculture," which was selected as a scalable program in the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel to mobilize funding for ten countries in the region, and which addresses four core issues affecting women: land rights, climate smart skills to improve productivity, access

to finance, and access to markets. She noted that technology and energy access serve as enablers to reach women in remote areas and link them to markets and potential buyers for their products. Ms. Sarr recommended that all PBF proposals include a livelihood angle in support of women's economic empowerment.

**8. Ms. Rahama Nantoumé, Think Peace, Mali** emphasized the importance of inclusion and the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding processes. Research conducted by Think Peace in Mali showed that sustaining peace cannot be achieved when women and youth are excluded from peacebuilding-related processes such as DDR and security sector reform. She outlined efforts by Malian civil society organizations to address the exclusion and marginalization of women in key peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes, and appealed to the Malian Government to provide equal access, opportunities and space for the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of the peace process.

9. Member States welcomed the briefings and raised the following points:

- The importance of implementing the PBC Gender Strategy, and of monitoring and assessing implementation and impact . In this connection, several Member States welcomed the convening of the PBC meeting during CSW63.
- Lack of access and inequality in public service delivery is a threat to social cohesion, stability, and sustainable peace. Several Member States recognized that the failure to involve women and wider civil society in peace processes and in the implementation of peace agreements has a negative impact on how social protection systems, public service delivery and infrastructure development are designed and implemented in conflict-affected settings.
- Many speakers considered women's empowerment as a tool for development, and hence saw the process of giving women greater access to social protection and public services as fundamental for building resilience in conflict-affected environments. In this regard, Member States underlined the importance of translating policy discussions into concrete interventions.
- Member States recognized the importance of financing initiatives that support the inclusion, participation and leadership of women in the design and implementation of recovery and development interventions in conflict-affected settings. Member States recognized and commended the positive impact of PBF projects on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the Fund's use of gender markers, independent assessments, and other monitoring and evaluation tools to track program results and impact.
- Some Member States highlighted how the implementation of gender quotas at the political level, helps elevate the voices of women to influence national planning and

implementation processes, including those in support of social protection and public service delivery.

- Member States highlighted specific priority sectors in conflict-affected contexts that adversely affect women: education, health, access to gender-based violence related services and protection and security sector institutions. Reform in these areas require good policies, capacity and financing, and in this regard some Member States voiced commitments to continue investing in these sectors
- Some Member States called for another progress assessment of SCR 1325 for its 20th anniversary in 2020. They suggested that the PBC contribution to the progress study could be in the form of a review of the implementation of the Gender Strategy. Such a review could help strengthen monitoring and reporting against the strategy and contribute to overall increase of the effectiveness of the strategy.

10. In conclusion, the Chair stated that the PBC meeting on the CSW63 priority theme highlighted the importance of women, gender equality and inclusivity. He further commended the role of the PBC in tackling the social protection subject as a demonstration of the Commission's growing dynamism and ability to discuss various issues of importance to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.