

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Papua New Guinea
12 May 2020
Chair's Summary

1. On 12 May 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Chair, H.E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard, convened a PBC ambassadorial-level meeting on Papua New Guinea. The purpose of the meeting was to hear a briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General, H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, on her March visit to Papua New Guinea, as well as to discuss recent developments in Papua New Guinea, including in light of the impact of COVID-19 on the country.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair commended the efforts of the government of Papua New Guinea and Autonomous Bougainville Government in creating the conditions for a peaceful referendum and post-referendum period. He expressed hope that the meeting on PNG would allow for the better understanding of the ongoing peacebuilding and political developments in PNG, shed light on the impact of COVID-19, and generate ideas for how the PBC can help mobilize continued support for nationally-owned peacebuilding efforts.
3. The Minister for Bougainville Affairs, Papua New Guinea, H.E. Dr. Sir Puka Temu, thanked Deputy Secretary-General for visiting PNG in March, noting that it was a great honor to meet with her, along with Minister Pungchau, during her visit. He also acknowledged H.E. Mr. Bertie Ahern, Chair of the Bougainville Referendum Commission, for his excellent work and thanked everyone for the successful conduct of the referendum. He informed that they continue to engage in dialogue with the Autonomous Bougainville Government through the Joint Supervisory Board process and have agreed to focus next on the Bougainville government elections in June. After the elections, they will begin the consultation process on the referendum results. Additionally, the Minister informed, the next Joint Supervisory Board meeting will affirm the ratification process, which should help the consultation process and when the referendum results are brought to parliament.
4. The Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) informed that the purpose of her mission to PNG, from 8-11 March 2020, was to mark International Women's Day, to launch the UN-EU Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls, and to discuss the challenges of gender equality alongside building peace, sustainable development, and climate change. She was accompanied by the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy and the Executive Director of UNAIDS. She noted that it was her last trip before COVID-19 became a pandemic and underscored that unless there is immediate action, PNG risks losing sustainable development and peace gains, with an increased risk of renewed violence and conflict. The DSG congratulated everyone involved in the successful referendum, acknowledging that it was a significant milestone in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and commend the commitment to moving forward with the joint consultation process. She informed of her meetings with women peacebuilders in country who spoke of their peacebuilding efforts in their communities and underlined the critical importance of women's equal participation. She remarked on the need to build on and invest in these capacities for peacebuilding. The DSG informed that PNG has some of the highest levels of violence against women and girls in the world and that the violence had been compounded by the restrictions of movement introduced in response to the

spread of COVID-19. She noted that violence against women is foremost about gender inequality and welcomed the Prime Minister's re-commitment to implementing constitutional provisions on reserved seats for women in Parliament. She reiterated the UN's support to Papua New Guinea in all its efforts to build gender equality and end discrimination and violence against women. The DSG reported being deeply impressed by the youth she met in PNG, noting that they were eager to be involved in their country's future, but often lacked opportunities for engagement. She underscored that the importance of access to quality education, decent employment and opportunities for political and civic participation, and welcomed the government's efforts towards these goals. Acknowledging that Papua New Guinea is on the frontlines of the climate crisis, the DSG noted that conservation and climate have clear implications for peace, security and sustainable development and that PNG has pioneered successful solutions in conservation and restoration of forests, wetlands, agricultural lands and mangroves, to ensure water security, food security and sustainable livelihoods. She commended efforts by the PNG government to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and called for unprecedented international solidarity to ensure that recovery addresses the vulnerability of PNG to external shocks. She urged strong support to the Government in building resilience and underlined the opportunity for investment in women's political participation and leadership, in ending violence, and in high-impact projects that create lasting conditions for development and peace.

5. PNG's Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Davis Steven, welcomed the strengthened commitment and focus on PNG, and thanked the DSG for her recent visit, noting that her very positive messages were encouraging and timely. He underlined the importance of strengthening women's representation in leadership and reiterated the government's commitment to establishing seats in parliament for women, a constitutional provision. He thanked the UN for COVID-19 assistance and acknowledged the work of the UN Resident Coordinator's efforts in a very well-coordinated and purposeful response with the government. The Deputy Prime Minister informed that climate change is becoming a climate crisis in PNG and welcomed assistance in raising the crisis' profile to access more support to mitigate its effects. He underscored the government's commitment to the Bougainville Peace Agreement and continuous consultation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government. He noted the critical role of the PBC and the PBF and thanked them for their support to Bougainville and the Highlands. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed hoped that the country would receive more support in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. The Minister for Post-referendum Consultations and Dialogue, Autonomous Bougainville Government, H.E. Mr. Albert Punghau, expressed commitment to implementing the peace agreement and thanked the UN and other contributing countries for their support for a successful referendum. In order to implement the peace agreement to its fullest, he informed that the two governments will need further support in post-consultation phase and the ratification, for meetings, an awareness campaign on the post-referendum consultation and the ratification, and for a moderator.
7. Member states welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They praised the governments of PNG and the Autonomous Bougainville region and the Referendum Commission on the peaceful, transparent, fair and credible Bougainville referendum and commended ongoing efforts at post-referendum

negotiations. They encouraged regular exchanges with the people of PNG and Autonomous Bougainville to ensure an understanding of the steps ahead.

- They welcomed the visit of the DSG and her efforts to highlight the importance of gender equality and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. They commended the commitment of the PNG government to more women's representation in parliament and emphasized the need for further progress on women's political participation, gender equality and women's empowerment.
- They welcomed the visit of the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy and welcomed the engagement of youth in PNG and Bougainville. They praised the Prime Minister's commitment to support the leadership and meaningful participation of youth.
- They commended the efforts of the PNG government and its people in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and called on the international community to support government efforts at strengthening resilience.
- They emphasized the PBC's critical role in supporting socio-economic development in the post-referendum phase while helping to maintain the momentum of the political process. They acknowledged the PBF's critical interventions in PNG and supported the re-eligibility of PNG for PBF support.

8. H.E. Mr. Max Hufanen Rai, Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, gave closing remarks and expressed deep appreciation for the consistent and sustained level of support from PBC since 2015. He conveyed Papua New Guinea's sincere appreciation to the DSG and highlighted that her visit helped to further consolidate the constructive relationship between PNG and the UN. The Ambassador reiterated that the constraints imposed by COVID-19 will have economic consequences in the short to long-term and will adversely impact the country's peacebuilding efforts, including in Bougainville and the Highlands region. In order to build a peaceful and prosperous future, he requested the continued support of the PBC, the PBF and the wider United Nations.