

PBC Ambassadorial-level meeting

Update on the Peacebuilding Fund and quarterly report by CSC Chairs

28 July 2021

Chair's summary

1. On 28 July 2021, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level virtual meeting convened by the Chair, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Edrees (Egypt), to receive an update on the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund and to receive the quarterly report by the Chairs of the PBC Country-configurations.
2. The Chair opened the meeting recognizing the important catalytic work of the PBF and welcoming the opportunity to hear a briefing on the activities of the Fund, which contributes to further strengthen the synergies between the PBC and the PBF. He also welcomed the opportunity to have the Chairs of the four PBC Country-configurations report on their activities.

Update on the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund

3. The Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, recalled that, at the PBF Replenishment Conference earlier this year, the Secretary-General underscored the importance of concerted efforts to ease tensions and prevent further escalation of the ongoing global turmoil, which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the ASG noted it was critical to continue investing in peacebuilding and prevention, not only because of increased risks but also because prevention makes the ongoing health response cheaper and more effective. He informed that the PBF has adapted quickly to respond to the specific new risks brought by the pandemic, stressing that over half of all ongoing PBF supported programmes required adjustments. He underscored that the PBF approved in 2020 investments for over \$173M in 39 countries, including \$28.7M in cross-border and regional projects, \$59.1M on women and youth inclusion, and \$35.4M to support transition settings, including several considered by the PBC and by the Security Council. He added that 40% of PBF projects supported gender equality and women's empowerment, surpassing the internal target of 30% and, for the sixth year in a row, the Secretary-General's target of 15%. The ASG stressed that COVID-19 changed the nature of peacebuilding support but also intensified demand, noting that while governments and development actors were responding to the health crisis and peacebuilding support was not always prioritized, requests for PBF support surged, for example quadrupling proposals in the 2021 Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) to 274 proposals from 25 countries. He noted that the Fund's priorities remain focused on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, with

investments mostly focused around the PBF's three priority windows: (1) women and youth empowerment; (2) cross border and regional peacebuilding; and (3) support to UN transitions. He added that the Secretary-General declared South Sudan, Niger and Kyrgyzstan eligible so far in 2021. Looking at the work done since the beginning of the year, the ASG explained that a priority has been the support to UNCTs and missions develop their proposals, and he informed that a large proportion of cross-border projects as well as upcoming significant investments in Burkina Faso, DRC, the Great Lakes, Guatemala, Mali, Niger and South Sudan are in the pipeline. He stressed the importance of partnerships in the work of the PBF and, in this regard, referred to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative established between PBSO and the World Bank. The ASG concluded noting that, despite having received \$90M so far this year, the Funds remain far from the \$220M target for 2021 as agreed in the the 2020-2024 Strategy. The unprecedented level of support received by the broad membership during the Replenishment Conference was encouraging. The ASG reaffirmed the readiness of PBSO to support Member States, including through the PBC, as they consider the options on financing presented in the SG Reports on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

4. Member States welcomed the presentation by ASG Fernandez-Taranco and raised the following points:
 - The PBF is an efficient, innovative and flexible tool to support conflict-affected countries and it has played a critical role in supporting peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in support of national identified priorities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fund was quick at adapting to emerging needs and at focusing on areas where it could demonstrate its comparative advantage, for example increasing its funding for cross-border and regional projects, as well we for transition settings. The Fund's work on these priority areas, including its support for women and youth, capacity building and justice is welcomed.
 - The PBF plays an important role in supporting coordination of UN peacebuilding efforts, particularly at the field level. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative is a positive step in fostering greater coherence between UN and World Bank, in line with the notion of national ownership and leadership.
 - PBC and PBF synergies need to be further strengthened and Commission and Fund should work together towards more inclusive societies and the equal participation of women and youth. PBC and PBF should also focus on joint up action and analysis, including with relevant international finance organizations, such as the World Bank and the IMF. Through the advisory role of the PBC to the Security Council, this collaboration will eventually benefit the work of the Council, particular during deliberations on mandates' renewals.
 - The increased demand for PBF support is welcomed but it also places stronger emphasis on the need to address funding gaps. The GA High-Level Meeting on financing is a critical step in the discussions on financing and the decision of the PBC to strengthen its focus on financing, including with a dedicated retreat and the annual session, can be critical to secure more resources for peacebuilding activities. Member States should consider broadening the Fund's donor base and look at all options from the Secretary-General, including those pertaining to assessed, innovative and voluntary.

5. In response to questions from the floor, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco underscored that the PBF is a strategic tool to help translate the UN reforms into practice. He recalled that, since the 2016 review of the peacebuilding architecture, peacebuilding is no longer a post-conflict phase but a part of the peace continuum and it happens before, during and after a conflict. The allocation of PBF funds reflects that approach, with support for projects which address the different phases of a conflict. Transitions, and in particular the drawdown of a peacekeeping operation, represent a critical phase for national governments and for the UN. In this regard, the PBF is a unique tool in the UN system to support national governments during transitions, especially helping them and UNCTs avoid a financial cliff. In connection with the relevance of prevention, the ASG referred to the joint UN-World Bank study *Pathways for peace*, noting that a key result of the study was to highlight that not only prevention saves lives but it is also cost-effective, noting that prevention can save between 5 and 70 billion dollars around the world. He also stressed that requests for PBF support are channeled through Resident Coordinators, hence helping them enhance UN coherence in the field. He noted that financing remains an issue and reiterated that, moving towards the GA High-level meeting, Member States should look into options to ensure more adequate, predictable and sustained resources. He spoke of the importance of expanding the donor base for voluntary contributions, of exploring innovative sources, but also of the need to have a discussion on assessed contributions. In this regard, he informed that a concrete proposal on the use of assessed contributions could be expected in the near future.
6. The Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch in DPPA-PBSO, Mr. Marc-Andre Franche, provided additional information on the work of the PBF in transitions. He referred to the *Integration Review*, which highlighted the contributions of the Fund in transition settings while highlighting the challenges posed by limited resources. He noted that the Fund is providing about 22% of its funds to transitions and added that the PBF is working with DSRG/RC/HC offices with a view to helping them strengthen their absorption capacities and allow for more programming in that area. He reaffirmed the PBF's commitment to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in peacebuilding settings. In connection with the Fund's work with Resident Coordinators, he referred to the SG report on the evolution of the RC system where pooled funds such as the PBF are critical tools to foster integration and coherence.

Quarterly report by the Chairs of the PBC Country-configurations

7. The Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration (Switzerland) informed of the arrival in New York of the new Permanent Representative of Burundi, H.E. Mr. Zéphyrin Maniratanga, and his cooperation with the Commission. She noted that, during earlier discussions, they both agreed on the importance of a visit to Burundi to meet with the authorities and a broad range of interlocutors from Burundian society and public life, as well as international partners. She recalled that the Commission met on 17 March to learn about the priorities of the Burundi government for peacebuilding and socio-economic development with an extensive briefing by Burundi, as well as by the UN Resident Coordinator a.i. and the World Bank Country Manager on their respective engagements with the government, including on the implementation of the National Development Plan. She noted the PBF's independent

evaluation of its Burundi portfolio for 2014-2020 and the in-depth situational analysis by Interpeace and emphasized building synergies between the PBF and the PBC. The Chair further recalled the Commission's meeting of 6 July that provided an opportunity to learn about Burundi's National Programme for peace capitalization, social stability and promotion of economic growth with briefings from the Chief of the Office of Strategic Studies and Development of the Presidency of the Republic of Burundi and the Head of UN OCHA in Burundi. The Chair noted Member States' interest in the Government's strategy and plans as well as their strong call for coherence and offers of support for tackling outstanding challenges. She closed by reiterating the PBC's commitment to providing a platform for partnerships and mobilizing support.

8. The Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration (Brazil) updated that, to learn more about the transition in country since the closure of UNIOGBIS last year, he engaged with the UN Resident Coordinator who informed that the transition has not faced any significant obstacles and that the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is being finalized. The Chair expressed hope for a meeting later in the year on UN-related activities in country. He recalled the Commission meeting of 29 June and highlighted that Guinea-Bissau's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and Communities briefed the Commission, which was the first high-level briefing from a government official since 2018. He informed of the Minister's insightful perspective on Guinea-Bissau's National Development Plan as well as the Strategy for Development, Employment and Industrial Promotion for the period 2020-2024, or Hora Tchiga. The Chair further recalled that the Minister welcomed the re-activation of the PBF Joint Steering Committee in country and emphasized the importance of continued support to women and youth. He noted that the Commission will focus on Guinea-Bissau's economic revitalization and the country's cooperation with International Financial Institutions in the coming months and that the next Configuration meeting will include briefings by IFIs.
9. The Chair of the PBC Liberia Configuration (Sweden) updated that the Commission held two Ambassadorial-level meetings. She recalled that the meeting on 9 March focused on gender equality and women's empowerment with the participation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Gender who briefed on the steps taken by the government to advance gender equality. The UN Resident Coordinator, joined by the UNWOMEN Country Director, and a representative of civil society also gave remarks, reiterating the need to continue to combat sexual and gender-based violence and to commit to realizing women's leadership at all levels. The Chair further recalled the meeting on 17 June which focused on national reconciliation and social cohesion with briefings by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior as well as civil society and the UN Resident Coordinator. She noted that one of the takeaways from this meeting included the tremendous potential of youth in Liberia as agents of peace and the need to continue to support youth empowerment programs and employment opportunities. She informed that she held bilateral consultations with IMF, World Bank and the African Development Bank with the objective to explore strengthening joint engagement and analysis with IFIs and the UN in the areas of peacebuilding. She noted that the consultations highlighted the common understanding of the importance of investments, government reforms, access to basic services and the need to address inequalities. The Chair emphasized that she was very encouraged by the strong commitment and high-level

engagement of the Liberian government and was pleased that CSOs and women-led organizations have a strong voice. She informed that the Commission's focus in 2021 included gender equality, reconciliation, COVID-19 response and recovery, and preparations for elections in 2023. She closed by reiterating the Commission's commitment to continue its political accompaniment and ensuring sustainable peace in Liberia, and expressed hope for the visit in the fall, either virtual or in-person.

10. The Chair of the PBC Central African Republic Configuration (Morocco) updated that the Commission held an expert-level and an ambassadorial-level meeting on 10 June and 12 July respectively to discuss the political, security and humanitarian situations in country. She noted that both meetings reaffirmed the Commission's role and added value, particularly during the electoral period, in helping to mobilize support to MINUSCA and the electoral process. She recalled that CAR was able to hold presidential and legislative elections, despite increased violence, and that authorities plan to hold local elections by the end of 2021 or in early 2022, the first in 30 years. She underscored that the local elections will further require an estimated \$10 million. The Chair updated that the expert-level meeting focused on progress made in the electoral process, the importance of continued support by all partners including the PBF and neighboring and regional countries, and concern over the misinformation campaign against MINUSCA and increased human rights violations in country. She underscored that at the 12 July Ambassadorial-level meeting, there was a high-level presence by several government ministers and briefers included the MINUSCA SRSG as well as the Head of the National Election Authority. The meeting focused on the need to revitalize the peace agreement; concerns about increased humanitarian needs as well as attacks and hate speech against MINUSCA; and the importance of MINUSCA's mandate renewal and its support to local elections and security sector reform. She noted that member states welcomed the Commission's advice to the Security Council and further emphasized coordination and coherence in international support to CAR. They also expressed support for political dialogue and the strengthening of reconciliation efforts, denounced hate speech and condemned violence and human rights violations. She closed by informing that the Chair hopes to visit the country before November, in order to submit timely and well-informed recommendations to the Security Council regarding MINUSCA's mandate.
11. The Chair closed the meeting thanking ASG for Peacebuilding Support and the Chairs of the PBC Country-configurations for their briefings.