

THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

Role of the PBC membership and the Relations with UN Principal Organs

Report by the Chair

Introduction

In the forward agenda contained in the report of the PBC on its sixth session, member states noted that “the unique membership structure of the Commission should enable it to serve as a central platform for discussion, coordination and advice on peacebuilding within the United Nations system and beyond.” The report further noted that “there is ... an urgent need to renew the sense of collective responsibility and commitment from the individual members of the Commission.....”. It is also important to note that the unique membership structure of the Commission was originally conceived to mirror the advisory function of the PBC to the UN principal organs, from which it draws the majority of its members. Therefore, there are expectations from the member states, particularly those who are elected/selected through the principal organs, to guide the development of practical and substantive advice of the PBC to the respective organs.

The PBC Forward Agenda for 2013 stipulates that the Organizational Committee, in particular through its members from the three UN principal organs, should take the lead on defining the scope of the Commission’s advisory role and to make practical recommendations on areas which would benefit from closer and more frequent interaction with each organ. To this end, the Chair convened three informal meetings at the expert-level during the months of April and May 2013 to which the Chairs of the PBC Configurations were also invited. The meetings provided an opportunity for initial exchange of ideas with the PBC members from each of three organs, including on the possibility for volunteering member states to take the lead in the development, coordination and implementation of certain tasks aimed at strengthening and rationalizing the links between the PBC and the three principal organs.

The General Assembly (16 May)

As a parent organ of the PBC, the General Assembly’s interaction with the PBC has been confined to the annual debates on the Commission’s report and formal briefings to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34). In 2008, one informal interaction with the PBC Chair was organized, but this practice has not been sustained. Several resolutions of the General Assembly on a variety of political, economic and humanitarian subjects have made reference to the role of the PBC, yet without concrete guidance from the Assembly on how it would benefit from the Commission’s advisory role.

The meeting with members of the PBC elected by the General Assembly has generated initial understanding around a specific proposal whose objectives are to:

- Identify possible themes which could benefit from a more periodic, dynamic and informal interaction between the General Assembly and the PBC. The thematic approach will help to gradually integrate a peacebuilding perspective in the General Assembly's deliberations on the political and socio-economic challenges facing post-conflict countries.
- Enable countries on the agenda to benefit from the convening and deliberative authority of the Assembly. Through more frequent and informal interactions, the visibility of the work of the PBC could be enhanced, and the base of political, technical and financial support to the countries on the agenda could be broadened.

The identified **themes** could range from issues that bestride all the countries on the agenda or other pertinent issues that the Commission may wish to bring forward for the attention of the general membership (e.g. national reconciliation, youth employment, role of youth in peacebuilding, women's role in peacebuilding...etc).

A practical **format** for the interaction between the General Assembly and the PBC is required in order to ensure more focused and frequent discussions, which will also allow non-UN actors to participate and share their views with Member States and other UN actors. Up to two **informal interactive dialogues** in General Assembly session can, therefore, be prepared in coordination with the incoming President of the General Assembly in order to allow for their inclusion in the Assembly's programme of work. The theme and objectives of, as well as the suggested follow-up actions to informal interactive dialogues will be coordinated by the Organizational Committee in close collaboration with the countries on the PBC agenda and the Chairs of the PBC configurations.

Next steps/ Suggested Action:

The Organizational Committee is invited to designate a member of the PBC from the General Assembly category as a **coordinator** whose role will be to take forward this proposal for the duration of its membership on the Committee (two years). The coordinator will be invited to keep the Organizational Committee periodically updated of the work undertaken in this regard.

The Security Council (23 May)

Despite the periodic formal interaction with the Security Council, the Council's debate on the PBC's annual report and informal interactive dialogue of July 2012 marked the first serious attempt to define the scope of the advisory role of the PBC to the Council and to explore opportunities for more pragmatic and informal interactions. On 26 April, the members of the Security Council convened the second informal interactive dialogue with members of the PBC Chairs' Group and the countries on the agenda (*Key points discussed at and emanating from this interactive dialogue are annexed to this report*).

The meeting with members of the PBC that are currently members of the Security Council focused, however, on one of the four main topics indicated in the attached annex, namely the modality of interaction.

Members of the Security Council were of the view that the modality of interaction should remain flexible and pragmatic. The modality must be guided by defining the added value of the Commission and by the scope and content of the PBC's advice. It was noted that a decision on the type of modality needed to be determined on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the Security Council's working methods and provisional rules of procedure. Members of the PBC Chairs' Group were, however, of the view that the modality of interaction between both organs needed to take different forms and that all available options for such interaction must remain open, including through invitation extended to Chairs of Country Configurations to attend relevant Council's closed consultations on the countries concerned.

Next steps/ Suggested Action:

The main points emanating from the informal interactive dialogue of 26 April 2013 (see ANNEX) provide a good basis for further defining the scope of the PBC's advisory role, the engagement from the Security Council and the modality of interaction between the two bodies. The role of the joint membership of both bodies will be further defined as a result of a shared understanding around these three areas.

To this end, the Organizational Committee is invited to designate a member of the PBC from the Security Council as a **coordinator** whose role will be to facilitate the development of such an understanding between the members of the PBC Chair's Group and the PBC members of the Security Council. The coordinator will be invited to keep the Organizational Committee periodically updated of the work undertaken in this regard.

An idea was additionally floated by a member of the PBC Chairs' group to form a small task force to look into relevant provisions of the Security Council's working methods and rules of procedure which would help identify possibilities for and limitations to certain modalities of interaction.

The Economic and Social Council (30 April)

Since 2009, ECOSOC and PBC have organized a series of thematic discussions and the Chair of the PBC has annually provided a general briefing to the substantive session of ECOSOC on the Commission's engagement in countries on the agenda. The meeting with members of the PBC that are currently members of the ECOSOC took place ahead of an annual meeting between the ECOSOC Bureau and the PBC Chairs' Group on 9 May. The participating members concluded that despite the efforts made by successive ECOSOC Presidents and PBC Chairs since 2009, the thematic discussions and annual briefings have not produced concrete outcomes. Members noted that there is need to revisit the existing scope of collaboration. To this end, the following proposals were made:

Mainstreaming Peacebuilding in the work of ECOSOC:

The Chairs of Country Configurations could be invited to the Operational Segment of ECOSOC substantive sessions in order to highlight achievements of and challenges facing specific countries. This will help promote greater alignment within UN system's operational work in the field. A peacebuilding perspective could also be brought into the preparations for the Development Cooperation Forum, in particular with regard to issues of aid quality, mutual accountability, south-south and triangular cooperation.

The subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC could incorporate a peacebuilding lens in their work by reflecting the implications of the themes in question for post-conflict countries or by drawing upon expertise in areas of direct interest to the countries on the PBC agenda (e.g. the Committee of Experts on Tax Matters could be asked to make recommendations on ways to improve tax collection and management in countries emerging from conflict).

Joint thematic meetings:

The continued relevance and importance of these thematic meetings will largely depend on high-quality outcomes and follow-up in order to ensure that the deliberations remain of direct relevance to the work of both bodies. There is a need to select a theme which will be sequentially addressed in a series of meetings and different fora in order to address the existing lack of follow-up to previous thematic discussions. While there was general agreement on the proposed timeline (October 2013) for the next joint thematic meeting, no decision was made on the theme. Proposals included "Natural resource management and land issues: implication for peacebuilding and socio-economic development" and "Agricultural development: Catalyzing socio-economic development and employment for peacebuilding".

Dialogue with key non-UN partners:

It was noted that ECOSOC could provide a key platform to increase international public awareness of the socio-economic opportunities for and challenges facing post-conflict countries. ECOSOC's convening power could be utilized to enhance the dialogue between the PBC and the private sector, philanthropic organizations and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Next steps/ Suggested Action:

The Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination and the Peacebuilding Support Office will develop an action plan which will explore the feasibility and realistic timeline for the implementation of these proposals, as well the type of political and practical support needed from the joint membership. The action plan will be the subject of further consideration of the ECOSOC Bureau and the PBC Chairs' Group, and will subsequently be brought for the consideration of the Organizational Committee.

ANNEX

Key points emerging from the Informal Interactive Dialogue between the PBC Chairs' Group, Countries on the Agenda and the members of the Security Council

26 April 2013

1. The scope of the PBC's advisory role to the Council (What can the Council expect from the PBC?)

- Post-conflict settings (UN mission settings):
 - Advice on and monitor progress in priority areas (e.g. state-building, institution-building, economic opportunities, women's and youth empowerment...etc.) and emerging needs/priorities;
 - Identify potential risks to and gaps in the peacebuilding process and help manage crises in agenda countries;
 - Serve as a bridging link to the Government of the country concerned;
 - Support senior UN leadership in the implementation of mandated peacebuilding-related tasks and activities;
 - Monitor the level of attention/commitment from national, regional and international actors;
 - Promote coherence among and alignment of UN and non-UN policies, activities and objectives.

- Transition of UN missions in countries on the agenda:
 - Focus national and international attention on key priority areas (political, socio-economic) which would help facilitate transition and draw-down of UN missions;
 - Offer a platform for the country concerned, the Council, SRSRG and Lead departments to reach out to broader segment of actors (bilateral, multilateral, regional...etc) to address potential funding and serious capacity gaps (UNCT, national) resulting from the UN mission draw-down an transition.
 - **Ongoing transition of UNIPSIL:** How should the Council and PBC work together to set a good precedent/success story?

- Long-term attention/focus on residual political and peacebuilding issues beyond the transition of the UN mission (the post and non-mission settings):
 - Sustain attention and commitment of the international community to situations with which the Council is no longer actively seized; i.e. following the drawdown of the mission.
 - **Form:** What are the possible (light) options?
 - **Substance:** Advocacy (highlighting progress/achievements), monitoring risks, pointing to opportunities.

2. Engagement from the Security Council (What can the PBC expect from the Security Council?)

- Clear and explicit reflection of the role of and expectations from the PBC in resolutions, PRSTs or written correspondence (e.g. letters of invitation for formal briefings);
- Secretary-General's reports on agenda countries to reflect progress in the areas of PBC engagement;

3. Modality of interaction (How can it become most efficient?)

- Informal conversations between members of both bodies should culminate in some form of interaction;
- Flexibility, pragmatism and country-specific needs should guide the modality of **interaction. Options for such modality include:**
 - Formal briefings (useful but need more focus – How?);
 - Informal consultations (???)
 - Informal interactive dialogues (could provide more accurate guidance/focus):
 - Types? (country-specific, broad policy-making/lessons learned)
 - Timing?
 - Alignment of country-related activities (on a case-by-case):
 - PBC/CSC Chairs' visits ahead of mandate renewals;
 - Contribution of the PBC to TAMs' recommendations (?)
 - Interaction with the Council's country lead members/penholders through:
 - PBC informal steering groups;
 - Active role in CSCs;
 - Participation in PBC visits ahead of mandate renewals.

4. Role of the joint membership

- Identify the relevant linkages, opportunities and needs of the Council from the PBC (through more active participation in the CSCs);
- Invoke/propose appropriate modalities of interaction;
- Ensure that the role of and expectations from the PBC is reflected in Council's deliberations and decisions on agenda countries.
