

Review Report on

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PBC GENDER STRATEGY

Prepared by DPPA/PBSO and UN Women

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1. Executive Summary

In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a [gender strategy](#) to ensure a more structural and systematic integration of gender perspectives across its work, including in its country and region-specific engagements, thematic discussions and dialogues with other intergovernmental organizations. This was the first such strategy to be adopted by a UN intergovernmental subsidiary body and followed a series of consultations throughout 2015 and early 2016 with Member States, practitioners, experts and representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, as well as with civil society organizations. In the [Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its thirteenth session](#), issued in January 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) called for a review report on the implementation of its gender strategy to be prepared in the context of the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

This review report was prepared by PBSO/DPPA and UN Women with support from an independent expert consultant. It complements consultations undertaken during the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the Commission's commitments contained in the in the [July 2020 letter](#) to the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, as well as to the Secretary-General to: enhance the implementation of its gender strategy by more systematically including women and representatives of women's groups in its meetings; streamline gender dimensions of peacebuilding in its country-specific and regional activities and within its analysis and advice to other UN intergovernmental bodies; support the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large; and improve stocktaking of women peacebuilders' messages from the field, including by compiling and sharing good practices with PBC Member States on a regular basis.

A desktop review of PBC documents and interviews with Commission members, including those representing countries which engage with the PBC, DPPA/PBSO staff, and women peacebuilders, found noticeable progress in the overall support and promotion of the PBC Gender Strategy and for gender-responsive peacebuilding. However, this is most evident through statements of broad support and advocacy instead of from concrete gender analysis and specific priority areas or focus on gendered root causes of conflict and instability. The review report notes that PBC documents tend to refer to women as a homogenous group instead of there being recognition that women's opportunities and experiences will vary depending on their ethnicity, religion, culture, age, ability/disability or gender identity.

It further found that while consultations with women's organizations are regularly referenced, the information exchanged during these sessions is not systematically reported on or incorporated into future PBC meetings on that country or regional context or thematic discussion. The report also states that beyond highlighting PBF projects supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, the Commission has rarely advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise, which is one of the strategic actions outlined in the Gender Strategy.

Encouragingly, the review found that gender considerations across the PBC have improved in 2019 and 2020 and these have led, in some instances, to richer discussions informed by women peacebuilders and local women business leaders.

Identified recent good practices in the report include: strengthened gender references in the Commission's advice to the Security Council on peace operation mandate renewals; the promotion of gender responsive peacebuilding approaches during meetings with International Financial Institutions; and the broadening of women peacebuilders who have been invited to engage with the Commission either in New York or during field missions to include women business leaders, ex-

combatants and survivors of conflict related sexual violence. The upcoming dedicated Ambassadorial-level meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region, which is being informed by three regional consultations in which diverse women briefers have participated, was also considered as a new good practice which should be expanded upon. The report also noted that meetings held this year to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding efforts have contained more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations with local women's organizations.

The review report outlines three triangular key factors which were identified during the interviews which determine the quality of gender considerations by the PBC. These relate to:

- The overall support and leadership from the PBC Chair, Vice-Chairs and Configuration Chairs;
- The level of in-country gender expertise or availability of context-specific gender analysis drawn from UN Country Teams, peace operations, Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects or from the wider UN system; and
- The receptiveness of national governments to embed gender peacebuilding priorities within their overarching development and peacebuilding plans.

Following the desk review, the interviews and an expert level meeting held on 4 September 2020, four key recommendations are proposed for PBC consideration to strengthen the systematic implementation of the gender strategy. These are:

- 1) Improved intersectional gender analysis as way of building on progress to date and moving towards more substantive gender discussions which address the gendered root causes of conflict and inform funding decisions where possible;**
- 2) Regular monitoring and review of the gender strategy including through the development of a gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework;**
- 3) Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders as part of thematic, country specific and regional discussions, to not only promote the participation of diverse women peacebuilders within PBC decision making processes but to also enrich and broaden the perspectives being presented to PBC members, and to ensure the PBC's gender responsive peacebuilding messages are informed by and reflect these engagements with women peacebuilders; and**
- 4) Enhanced advocacy across the UN system including the Security Council and with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities.**

2. Background

In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a [gender strategy](#) to ensure a more structural and systematic integration of gender perspectives across its work, including in its country and region-specific engagements, thematic discussions and dialogues with other intergovernmental organizations. This was the first such strategy to be adopted by a UN intergovernmental subsidiary body and followed a series of consultations throughout 2015 and early 2016 with Member States, practitioners, experts and representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, as well as with civil society organizations.

In the [Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its thirteenth session](#), issued in January 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) called for a review report on the implementation of its gender strategy to be prepared in the context of the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). This review report aims to complement and build on consultations undertaken during the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review and to inform both the PBC's annual meeting on women, peace and security (WPS), as well as its advice to the UN Security Council ahead of the October 2020 annual debate on the WPS agenda.

Prior to the development and adoption of the 2016 PBC Gender Strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission Support Office (PBSO) and UN Women undertook a desk review of PBC documents to ascertain the number of outcomes which referred to gender considerations. The findings from the 2016 Light Review serve as a useful baseline for the 2020 implementation report of the PBC gender strategy and include:

- 38 percent of documents reviewed reflected gender language;
- From PBC's inception to 2016, there was a demonstrated increase in support for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, considerations were inconsistent;
- All country-specific instruments of engagement did recognize the role of women in building peace, with varying degrees of emphasis;
- Formal PBC commitments to gender-response peacebuilding were not consistently translated into concrete action on the ground and relied on the personal engagement of the Chair and on the capacity of national actors and the country teams to follow up on those commitments;
- Field-level meetings with women's organizations were not systematically reported on or reflected in policy-level discussions;
- When the situation in a country or region worsened, gender commitments were no longer captured in formal and informal discussions and women were seen only through a victims lens rather than as agents for change.

3. Methodology

There were two research phases which informed preparation of this draft gender strategy implementation report. The first involved a desk review of 126 PBC documents from September 2016 to mid-August 2020 to determine the degree to which the seven strategic action areas of the PBC Gender Strategy are reflected in country and region-specific outcomes and within broader thematic discussions. Documents reviewed included:

- Seven documents relating to the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review;
- Four PBC Annual Reports from 2017-2020, as well four meeting summaries on the informal adoption of the annual reports;
- 30 documents relating to the PBC's engagement with and advisory role to the Security Council (including advice on thematic issues such as youth, peace and security and women, peace and security; mandate renewals; statements by PBC and Configuration Chairs; and

letters to the Presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly and to the Secretary-General);

- Six documents on the PBC meetings with ECOSOC;
- 12 documents relating to PBC visits;
- 58 other country and region-specific documents not captured in the engagement with the Security Council or PBC visits; and
- Five meeting summaries on thematic discussions relating to women, peace and security; peacebuilding and sustaining peace; South-South cooperation; and youth, peace and security.

Following the desk review, informal interviews were conducted with Commission members, including those representing countries which engage with the PBC, and PBSO/DPPA staff to expand on the initial findings identified in the text-based analysis. Interviews were also conducted with women peacebuilders who have engaged with the PBC either as part of New York meetings or during field visits to get their perspective on how this engagement impacted on their work and could potentially be strengthened. An expert-level meeting was then scheduled on 4 September to discuss the overall findings and future steps which can be considered by PBC members at the ambassadorial-level meeting scheduled on 2 October to further strengthen the implementation of the gender strategy.

4. 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

In October 2019, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council launched the [2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review](#) to take stock of work done by the UN on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to identify ways to further strengthen the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, taking into account the ongoing UN reforms. As part of this review, the PBC held a series of consultations on peacebuilding in UN transition contexts; women's role in peacebuilding; the importance of institution building; UN system-wide engagement; financing, and partnerships for peacebuilding.

The 2020 review process also considered the fast-evolving COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for peacebuilding. Documents relating to the 2020 review provide important considerations for future efforts to strengthen the implementation of the PBC gender strategy, as they outline the areas of progress, challenges and recommendations on gender responsive peacebuilding already identified by the PBC and capture the recommendations put forward by Member States to enhance the work of the PBC in support of women's participation in peacebuilding.

The [July 2020 letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council](#) and to the Secretary-General contains a specific section on women's participation in peacebuilding. Among the listed challenges is an acknowledgement that women in certain country-specific contexts continue to face gender-based discrimination and structural barriers to equal opportunities for participation in decision making and peacebuilding processes. The Commission also notes that gender dimensions are often considered as an afterthought instead of being an integral part of conflict analysis and planning that feeds into peacebuilding strategies. It commits to enhancing implementation of its gender strategy by more systematically including women and representatives of women's groups in its meetings, streamlining gender dimensions of peacebuilding in its country-specific and regional activities and within its analysis and advice to other UN intergovernmental bodies, supporting the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large, and improving stocktaking of women peacebuilders' messages from the field, including by compiling and sharing good practices with PBC Member States on a regular basis. While the research conducted for this gender strategy implementation report was separate to

the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review process, the key findings and suggested areas for improvement are similar, in part, to those already identified by Member States and the Peacebuilding Commission in various meetings.

5. Key Findings and Observations from the 2020 Desk Review

While PBC meeting summaries, statements, annual reports and meeting concept notes may not capture all of the detailed discussions and considerations pertaining to a particular context or thematic issue, they do highlight the key priorities and areas of focus for the Commission. As such, the reviewed documents point to important trends on how gender considerations are being integrated across the work of the Commission and the degree to which the seven strategic action areas contained within the gender strategy are being advanced.

Quantitative analysis of the 126 reviewed documents shows that:

- 111 document (88 percent) contain gendered references. The majority of those without gender references are from 2018 and earlier, with 29 percent of 2018 documents reviewed including no language on gender. No 2020 document to date, is without at least a broad gender reference.
- 63 documents (50 percent) make direct reference to consultations with women's organizations. Out of these 63 documents, 41 (65 percent) convey to various levels of details the key issues raised by women peacebuilders and women leaders.
- 37 documents (30 percent) include some form of gender analysis as well as broad references supporting women's participation in peacebuilding.
- Of the 66 PBC meeting summaries which were reviewed, 44 of these (67 percent) include references to expressions of support by Commission for gender responsive peacebuilding, usually emphasizing the importance of women's participation and the ongoing need to consult with women civil society representatives.

The two annexes below contain more detailed analysis on how the **seven strategic action** areas identified in the gender strategy as well the gender considerations are progressing per country, region and thematic engagement. Annex One illustrates the uneven way in which the seven strategic action areas are being applied:

- Of the seven strategic actions, the **first** on strengthening substantive integration of gender perspectives in all PBC country and region-specific, thematic and strategic engagement, is the one which is most advanced. However, most references are general in nature, instead of substantive and drawn from specific gender analysis.
- Interviews confirmed the findings from the desk review that specific gender priority areas for gender responsive peacebuilding for country and region-specific engagement are rarely identified as it relates to the **second** strategic action area of the strategy.
- There is only one reference on engaging men and youth, the **third** strategic action. This dates back to a September 2016 meeting on the Mano River region.
- The **fourth** strategic action, on ensuring the whole PBC supports the implementation of the gender strategy, has also seen progress. This includes the annual reports of the PBC where there has been an overall improvement in the quality of gender references and gendered elements incorporated into the final sections on actions and best practices. Similarly, in 66 percent of reviewed meeting summaries, PBC members are reported to have expressed their support for gender responsive peacebuilding efforts.
- In terms of the **fifth** strategic action on gender considerations during PBC field visits, all visits since June 2018 have included meetings with women civil society organizations and women leaders and there has been to different degrees promotion of local women's peacebuilding work.

- The **sixth** strategic area on strengthening systematic coordination and information sharing on gender responsive peacebuilding at UN Headquarters and with other regional organizations is also progressing, especially in the last 18 months. Progress is particularly evident with regard to the Commission's engagement with the Security Council.
- The **seventh** and final strategic action encourages the Commission to advocate for dedicated expertise and funding for gender-responsive peacebuilding. The PBC regularly highlights PBF projects that support gender equality and women's empowerment. However, beyond this there are only a few instances, as captured in the reviewed documents, where the Commission has advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise.

Five overall observations can be drawn from the desk review:

1. There is noticeable progress in the overall support and promotion of the PBC Gender Strategy and for gender-responsive peacebuilding. However, this is most evident through statements of broad support and advocacy instead of from concrete gender analysis and specific priority areas or focus on gendered root causes of conflict and instability.
2. Other than broad support for women's empowerment and participation in political and peacebuilding processes, it is not always clear what the specific gender priorities are in particular countries and regions being considered by the PBC.
3. Women are referred to as a homogenous group instead of there being recognition that women's opportunities and experiences will vary depending on their ethnicity; age; sex, etc.
4. While consultations with women's organizations are regularly referenced, the information exchanged during these sessions is not systematically reported on.
5. Beyond highlighting PBF projects supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, the Commission has rarely advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise.

6. Key Takeaways from the 2020 Interviews

Overall impressions on the implementation of the gender strategy

Interviews with Commission members and PBSO/DPPA confirmed and expanded on the findings identified during the desk review. Everyone interviewed to date considered there had been overall progress and support for the implementation of the strategy at the normative level. A shift was seen in official discourses in terms of both recognizing the central role women peacebuilders play in peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the need to integrate gender perspectives in peacebuilding discussions and decision-making processes.

The strategy and the twin 2016 resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, adopted by the UN Security Council and General Assembly, are credited with improving the understanding among Member States for more systematic integration of gender perspectives and for providing helpful guidance on how to do so. Member States and UN Secretariat representatives that were engaged with the Commission prior to the adoption of its gender strategy recounted that past efforts to promote gender perspectives and women's participation in peacebuilding discussions, while well-intentioned and strategic, had always been ad hoc. This is reflected in the 2016 light review of PBC's engagement on gender, which found that only 38 percent of then documents reflected gender language within them. This is in contrast with the 88 percent of documents which include gendered language since the adoption of the strategy.

According to those interviewed, the gender strategy also led to increased support for consultations with women civil society organizations and their representatives. Interviewees considered that the

quality of gender considerations across the PBC had most improved in 2019 and 2020 and have led, within some meetings at least, to richer discussions informed by women peacebuilders and local women business leaders. Several PBC members pointed to the increased consideration of gender perspectives in meetings on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and the upcoming dedicated Ambassadorial-level meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region, which is being informed by three regional consultations in which diverse women briefers have participated, as recent good practice examples which should be expanded upon.

Broad but non-systematic or substantive support for gender perspectives

While interviewees agreed that the gender strategy enjoys broad support among PBC members, there was also consensus on it not yet being systematically institutionalized across all discussions or it regularly leading to substantive discussions on gender dimensions. Some Member State acknowledged that the promotion of gendered elements still largely relies on the individual championing by Member States, both at expert and ambassadorial levels. This then points to the strategy not yet being completely institutionalized across the PBC.

A lack of consistency and systematic implementation were the terms most commonly referred to by Member States to describe the current status of the gender strategy. Some described this as a gap between general rhetoric and prioritized action. There is a recognized need among interviewees to move from broad statements of support on gender dimensions to more detailed considerations of gendered realities within the context or theme being discussed. This reflects the findings from the desk review that while gendered references have increased, for the most part, they remain general in nature instead of being substantive and based on gender analysis or data from the specific context being considered. The desk review identified only 30 percent of documents which included any gendered analysis or specific data pointing to the lived experiences, challenges or opportunities faced by women and girls in a particular context or as relating to a theme being discussed.

Three triangular key factors were identified during the interviews which determine the quality of gender considerations by the PBC. These relate to:

1. The overall support and leadership from the PBC Chair, Vice-Chairs and Configuration Chairs;
2. The level of in-country gender expertise or availability of context-specific gender analysis drawn from UN Country Teams, peace operations, Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects or from the wider UN system; and
3. the receptiveness of national governments to embed gender peacebuilding priorities within their overarching development and peacebuilding plans.

Ownership, accountability and monitoring of the gender strategy implementation

Member States who were interviewed identified the lack of specific accountability and monitoring mechanisms as hindering the full implementation of the gender strategy. It was emphasized that PBC members should assume ownership of its gender strategy, with PBSO/DPPA assisting in its implementation. While it was acknowledged that PBSO/DPPA has a key role to play in strengthening the level of specificity and targeted gendered information considered, including in preparatory documents, Commission members are seen as having responsibility in institutionalizing and implementing the gender strategy with the consent of the country being considered. Collaboration with national governments and regional and sub-regional organizations is seen as critical.

The Commission no longer having a gender focal point was raised as a detriment by several Member States, as this led to there being no PBC member specifically responsible for ensuring the advancement of the gender strategy or consistent gender considerations during context specific and

thematic discussions. As the Commission has moved away from having thematic focal points, several interviewees suggested that informal gender champions could take on this role, in a less formal way, in promoting the implementation of the strategy and incentivizing other members to do so as well. That said, ensuring the mainstreaming of gender considerations across all discussion areas was also seen as needing to be the responsibility of all PBC members.

Adding to the issue of responsibility and accountability is the lack of metrics to monitor the strategy's implementation. This was an issue that was identified by nearly all Member States interviewed. There is no perceived systematized way to either integrate or track the gender strategy into the PBC's daily work. The checklist which accompanies the strategy as an annex is used by some experts in missions and in PBSO/DPPA; however, this is not considered as a sufficient tool to monitor the progress of the strategy which needs to be more actionable and measurable.

Synergies between the PBC and PBF

Interviewees noted as a positive that in recent years there have been strengthened synergies between the PBC and PBF and 40 percent of the Fund's investments support gender equality and women's empowerment related initiatives. PBF information is incorporated into preparatory documents ahead of PBC meetings and visits and gendered projects supported by the Fund are regularly referred to in statements and meeting summaries. Without undermining the separate decision making processes, this synergy between the two entities was considered as mutually beneficial as the PBC can bring more visibility, political support and resource mobilization to PBF projects and in return the Fund can be a conduit for strengthened gender analysis and highlight the impact that gender projects are having locally.

Member States credit the PBF with bringing to the PBC more tangible information on the situation facing women and girls in specific contexts and of showcasing good practice examples which could be further supported and promoted. PBF projects are considered as useful entry points for PBC discussions and during visits, especially as visits now regularly include field trips to gender projects supported by the fund. Two Member State representatives thought that without the availability of PBF information, their Ambassadorial statements would often mostly be broad statements of support rather than being able to draw on specific experiences of women peacebuilders in that country. However, highlighting the importance of strengthening the available gendered information for consideration by PBC members, it was noted that PBF project information should ideally complement broader gender data and not be solely relied upon as the only source of detailed gender analysis. The promotion of gendered peacebuilding dimensions should extend beyond references to PBF projects.

Capacity constraints

The limited resourcing of gender expertise in Member State missions and at the DPPA/PBSO was identified by most PBC members interviewed as a further challenge contributing to the inconsistent implementation of the gender strategy. Within missions, the gender expert is usually a separate person to the one who engages with the PBC. Member State representatives explained how this can lead to a siloed approach and fragmentation on how important gender dimensions of peacebuilding are mainstreamed in the daily work of the PBC by Commission members.

PBC members interviewed also acknowledged the limited gender capacity within PBSO/DPPA relating to the one UN Women seconded post. Several Member States interviewed recognized that it is challenging for one seconded focal point within PBSO/DPPA to support all of the gender

integration required for the full implementation of the strategy. PBSO/DPPA staff interviewed also understood that integrating gender dimensions needs to be the responsibility of all staff.

Feedback from women peacebuilders and women leaders

The five women peacebuilders who were interviewed following their briefings to the PBC, expressed gratitude at the opportunity to present their perspectives to the Commission. They considered this engagement important to ensure high-level decision-making processes can consider the lived experiences of local women peacebuilders. However, a common reflection was that the briefings feel like a one-off statement which does not lead to further dialogue or follow up at the expert level.

Two women peacebuilders wondered what the concrete impact or outcome was from the high-level meetings at which they briefed and recommended the PBC consider alternative forms of engagement which promote more dialogue and engagement over a longer-period. This reflects the findings from the desk review that only 50 percent of documents reviewed make direct reference to consultations with women's organizations and women leaders, and of those only 2/3rds convey to various levels of details the key issues raised by women peacebuilders and women leaders.

7. Recent Good Practice Examples

Based on the desk review and interviews, the following is a list of identified recent good practice examples in terms of gender considerations and enhanced consultations with women leaders and civil society representatives. These provide concrete examples on ways the PBC could expand on the work it has already commenced in order to improve the overall integration of gender perspectives across its work.

- The July 2020 **PBC letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council** and to the Secretary-General **on the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review** acknowledges that women across different contexts face ongoing participatory barriers and that gender considerations are still not integral parts of conflict analysis and planning that feed into peacebuilding strategies. The Commission commits to, among other measures, further mainstreaming gender into its activities, analysis and advice to the General Assembly and the Security Council.
- **Liberia**: in June 2020, the Chair of the Liberia Configuration held, due to travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the first virtual meeting with civil society, including women's civil organizations and conveyed messages raised in the discussion back to the Commission; and **the virtual visit on Liberia to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund** in May 2020 appears to be the first of such meetings to refer to gender dimensions of peacebuilding.
- The October 2019 PBC **advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate** renewal includes important gender recommendations including urging the mission to enhance its communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement.
- The PBC held an **Ambassador level dedicated meeting on the WPS agenda** in October 2019 ahead of the annual Security Council open debate. The first such dedicated meeting was held in March 2019 during the Commission on the Status of Women.
- During both the **visits to Burundi in May 2019 and to Central African Republic in March 2019**, the Chairs of those country configurations went on field trips to see projects supported by the PBF dedicated to enhancing local women's mediation efforts and participation.

- During the **January 2020 Ambassadorial meeting in Cartagena in Colombia**, PBC members met with women former combatants and survivors who described opportunities and challenges they faced in their reintegration and entrepreneurship efforts. This form of engagement is considered unique for the PBC and highlights the importance of Commission members hearing directly from local women with lived experience of conflict and their peacebuilding recommendations.
- The PBC is planning a dedicated Ambassadorial **meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region**, which will be informed by three consultative dialogues attended by regional women leaders, government representatives, members of the Advisory Board for WPS in the Great Lakes Region, women entrepreneurs and business leaders, regional Fora and civil society representatives, as well as international partners. This diversity in women briefers is a new good practice, including by women business leaders, which should be further encouraged to allow the Commission to hear different perspectives and possible recommendations to peacebuilding challenges.
- The Commission's **meetings to discuss the impact of COVID 19 on peacebuilding efforts** have contained more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations with local women's organizations.

8. Recommendations for PBC Consideration

Following the desk review, the interviews and the expert level meeting, four key recommendations are proposed for PBC consideration to strengthen the systematic implementation of the gender strategy. These are:

- 1) **Improved intersectional gender analysis as way of building on progress to date and moving towards more substantive gender discussions which address the gendered root causes of conflict and inform funding decisions where possible;**
- 2) **Regular monitoring and review of the gender strategy including through the development of a gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework;**
- 3) **Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders as part of thematic, country specific and regional discussions, to not only promote the participation of diverse women peacebuilders within PBC decision making processes but to also enrich and broaden the perspectives being presented to PBC members, and to ensure the PBC's gender responsive peacebuilding messages are informed by and reflect these engagements with women peacebuilders; and**
- 4) **Enhanced advocacy across the UN system including the Security Council and with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities.**

Improved Gender Analysis

The systematic incorporation of gender analysis and data into preparatory documents would enable the PBC to have significantly more substantive gendered discussions on the peacebuilding elements being considered. Ideally, this would occur ahead of all Ambassadorial-level meetings and visits and not just prior to meetings with a dedicated gender focus. As part of ensuring PBC discussions move away from considering women as a homogenous group, gender analysis which informs Commission discussions should aim to be intersectional and address the different and overlapping factors that

result in discrimination and exclusion such as ethnicity, religion, culture, age, disability or gender identity.

In addition to highlighting data from PBF projects, PBSO/DPPA should be encouraged and supported to consistently draw on already available UN system-wide information from across the UN system to identify targeted and specific gendered considerations which could be promoted and stimulate more impactful discussions by PBC members. Potential starting points could include the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) documents, Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and UN Sustainable Development Co-operation Frameworks (UNSDCF).

The availability of gender analysis and information is a recognized challenge across the UN system. For instance, in his [2019 WPS report](#), the Secretary-General underscored that the UN's ability to respond to the challenges of ensuring women's human rights and development, is contingent on the consistency, quality and coherence of the gender analysis employed. New York based civil society working on peacebuilding issues could also be invited to submit information drawn from their vast networks of women peacebuilders working at the national, provincial and grassroots levels. As was pointed out by a PBC member, Commission members could as well seek out additional gendered information from their own capitals and embassies, if present in the country or region being considered, in addition to from the countries being discussed.

While PBSO/DPPA recognizes its role in compiling more detailed and succinct gender data for PBC consideration, it is also Member States responsibility to then ensure this information is acted upon and integrated into discussions and outcomes. Without improved gender analysis informing Commission discussions, the risk remains that the issuing of broad statements of support, which neither lead to tangible impact for women peacebuilders nor address the gendered root causes of conflict, remain the norm. There was support among those interviewed to replicate on a yearly basis, and for different regions, a similar gender deep dive process which is being undertaken this year on the women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region.

Regular Monitoring and Review

To overcome the challenge identified during the interviews relating to the lack of accountability for and monitoring of the gender strategy implementation, several MS expressed a need to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework or action plan to accompany the gender strategy. This could lead to more substantive and systematic gender considerations by the Commission and should include specific metrics that can be referred to throughout the year to monitor implementation progress. Such a plan is considered as essential to move from rhetorical support for gendered dimensions of peacebuilding to the context specific operationalization of the strategy and to identify forward looking opportunities for the PBC to progress its gender equality objectives.

In addition to assessing the potential impact that PBC targeted gendered promotion and advocacy is having in particular contexts through ongoing engagements with local women peacebuilders, possible gender strategy metrics to consider include:

- whether specific gender data relating to the peacebuilding priority being promoted by the PBC has been identified and regularly acted upon;
- if key issues and recommendations put forward by women leaders are integrated into PBC outcome documents, annual reports and advocacy messages;
- the percentage of PBC documents which include country and region-specific gender analysis and sex disaggregated data; and

- the degree to which PBC's engagement with the Security Council, ECOSOC, regional organizations and International Financial Institutions integrate targeted gender messages.

In addition to a gender strategy action plan, strengthening reporting on the gender strategy in the PBC's annual reports, as already committed to as part of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and holding bi-annual gender focused expert-level meetings would enable Member States to operationalize the gender strategy by identifying and agreeing on gender priorities for the various contexts on the Commission's agenda to promote throughout the year and also to track progress on the implementation of the strategy.

Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders

The last 12 months have already seen positive developments relating to the diversification of women leaders invited to engage with the Commission during visits and in meetings held either face to face or virtually. These include the interactions with women ex-combatants and survivors in Colombia in January 2020; the virtual consultation with Liberian civil society on the impact of COVID-19 in June 2020; and the briefings by women business leaders and entrepreneurs during the July 2020 Great Lakes consultation on the economic empowerment of women and their effective participation in peacebuilding within the evolving context of COVID-19.

These diverse interactions with women leaders enable Commission members to hear directly from women across different facets of society on their peacebuilding perspectives, lived experiences and recommendations on how to achieve sustained peace within the countries or regions that they live in. Significantly, they recognize the different roles women have in society and that their active involvement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace extends beyond civil society organizations or as local mediators. By facilitating such opportunities for engagement, the Commission is directly promoting the importance of women's participation in decision making processes and therefore supporting one of the central tenants of gender-responsive peacebuilding. These briefings also enable PBC members to be informed by unique points of view which they may not hear elsewhere and be presented with analysis not captured in UN documents. While there is a recognised benefit in Commission members hearing from women peacebuilders engaged in PBF projects, for instance members of the Burundi Women Mediators' Network, it is also worthwhile identifying additional briefers who are not affiliated with PBF projects to engage with the Commission to further strengthen the diversity of views being considered.

The ability to engage with the Commission virtually broadens the scope of individuals who could participate in New York based meetings and recount their unique perspectives without the concern of needing to make travel arrangements, secure visas or undertake lengthy and costly trips. Video briefings by women civil society representatives from conflict affected countries have successfully been integrated into Security Council meetings and could similarly become common practice during PBC meetings.

In addition to seeking input from local women peacebuilders via Regional Coordinators and UN Country Teams, another way for the PBC to strengthen this engagement is by regularly inviting inputs from New York based peacebuilding civil society who represent international peacebuilding networks. These could act both as a conduit between local women peacebuilders and the Commission and be a valuable source of context specific gender analysis, data and recommendations.

Importantly, this strengthened engagement with diverse civil society and women peacebuilders then requires for the PBC to act upon the information provided to it as part of these engagements and

incorporate the key calls and recommendations put forward in these briefings in its broader advocacy messages including to the Security Council, regional organizations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Without acting on the information received, these interactions risk being perceived as somewhat tokenistic and performative. A gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework should capture and report on this enhanced engagement with women peacebuilders and outline how this will be undertaken.

Enhanced advocacy across the UN system, with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions

The PBC is recognized as being a unique convening, resource mobilizing and advocacy platform whose members represent the broad UN membership. As such it has a unique opportunity to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities in its advice to the Security Council, when meeting with other UN bodies such as ECOSOC and when engaging with IFIs, including the World Bank and the IMF. There has already been noted progress in how the Commission has recently incorporated gender perspectives into its advice to the Security Council. The commitment within the July 2020 letter to the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and to the Secretary-General to strengthen ties with the Informal Expert Group on WPS, is a natural entry point to further enhance the Commission's gendered messaging, analysis and advice to the Security Council particularly as it relates to the gendered dimensions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

As highlighted above, during the May 2020 virtual visit to the World Bank and IMF, the Chair of Liberia configuration stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach to the COVID-19 response. This appears to have been the first time that such an emphasis was made. Future engagements with IFIs should expand on this and highlight not only the need for gender responsive approaches but also the importance of promoting women's economic empowerment and participation, as well as key recommendations on how to do so put forward by women business leaders the Commission has heard from. This would also complement the [World Bank's 2016-2023 Gender Strategy](#).

Annex One -Progress Advancing the Seven Strategic Actions

Strategic Action 1 – Strengthen substantive, cross-cutting integration of gender perspectives in all PBC country-specific thematic and strategic engagement

Of the seven strategic actions, the first one is the one which has most progressed. Of the 110 documents which include language on gender, 90 of these (81 percent) can be categorized as advancing or contributing to Strategic Action 1. The quality of these references however differs, with the majority of these only offering broad support for women’s inclusion or emphasizing the importance of empowering women and youth, instead of including tangible analysis on the situation facing women and the participatory and economic barriers they may face.

PBC’s annual reports are a good example of this. For instance, the 2017 report welcomes the adoption of the Gender Strategy; refers to inviting women civil society representatives from Sierra Leone to brief on women’s participation in the upcoming election; and also mentions consultations ahead of the Liberian elections and the UNMIL drawdown, but offers no gender sensitive analysis on either of these countries or others captured in the report. Similarly, the 2018 report references consultations with women civil society representatives, the importance of inclusive processes which promote women’s participation and of considering gendered dimensions of peacebuilding, but provides no specific details on the outcome of the consultations or specific gendered priority areas the PBC will work on alongside Member States which engage with the commission. The 2019 report includes the broad support for women’s empowerment and inclusion and general references to consultations but encouragingly also makes specific reference to efforts to adopt legislation on gender quotas in Guinea-Bissau and identifies as a potential area of support women’s involvement in the Sierra Leone election.

In the January 2020 report summarizing 2019 activities, support is given to Chad’s peacebuilding efforts including as it relates to gender equality; the full involvement of women and youth is emphasised in relation to the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and Mano River Union regions and there is explicit support for the full implementation of the gender strategy and a commitment to holding an annual discussion on best practices on “women and peacebuilding” to feed into the Security Council’s annual open debates. It specifically welcomes the efforts of The Gambia to promote human rights and gender equality, including the Government’s intent to repeal all discriminatory laws and its appointment of women to senior leadership positions. This is the only specific reference in the report, while sections on Guinea-Bissau, Liberia - including meetings with the AU and ECOWAS, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka include no gendered references or advocacy, nor do they mention consulting with women civil society organizations. While the gendered references have increased in consecutive annual reports, they remain in most part general in nature, instead of substantive.

Strategic Action 2- Identify thematic priority areas of gender responsive peacebuilding for region and country specific engagement.

The priority areas listed under strategic action 2 include: peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention; good governance and leadership; rule of law; integration of gender equality within SSR and DDR; economic empowerment; women’s recovery processes and protection strategies; and access to basic social infrastructure. From the documents reviewed, it appears that this strategic action is relatively inconsistent in its application and it is not clear what specific gender priorities are designated for each country and region. Interviews confirmed that this level of specificity is rarely included in country and region-specific discussions.

Peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention

Support for women's participation in peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention is the area which receives most emphasis in the documents reviewed. This usually take the form of the Commission expressing its continued commitment and support for the meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding processes. In some instances, this includes calling for the removal of barriers to women's meaningful participation, but these are not usually identified. In the PBC July 2020 letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council on the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review, the Commission restates its commitment to advancing the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding. Among the outstanding challenges, the letter mentions the continued presence in country-specific context of gender-based discrimination and structural barriers to women's participation. More specific advocacy focusing on the concrete barriers women face would strengthen this priority area considerably.

Good governance and leadership

While few in number, there are some positive and specific examples of the PBC promoting the good governance and leadership priority area. These include welcoming The Gambia Government's appointment of women to senior leadership positions (2020 annual report); supporting gender quotas in Guinea-Bissau (2019 annual report); welcoming the appointment of 11 women to the Government (2019 statement by Guinea-Bissau Configuration Chair), and the Gender Parity Law (2018 Statement by Guinea-Bissau Configuration Chair); noting as a positive development the Central African Republic parliament discussing setting a quota for female politicians in August 2018 and in its October 2019 advice to the Security Council on MINUSCA's mandate suggesting the council address various obstacles for participation and representation of women in the elections; and discussing during the December 2017 visit to Sierra Leone the negative trend in women's participation in parliament which at the time was 'significantly below the aspired 30 percent'.

Rule of Law

In terms of rule of law, there are fewer specific examples than those relating to good governance but include: welcoming the repeal of discriminatory laws in The Gambia (2020 annual report); emphasizing the importance of gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding, including good governance, justice and rule of law in Burundi (October 2019 statement by Chair of Configuration to Security Council); and noting that legislation on violence against women was still outstanding in Liberia (April 2018 Configuration Chair Statement to Security Council and the PBC Meeting on Liberia: Chair's Summary; June 2017). As part of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, the PBC commits to supporting the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large, end impunity regarding such violence.

Integration of gender equality within Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (DDR)

Within the documents reviewed there were only two identified substantive references to gender sensitive SSR and DDR. The first during the October 2019 Ambassadorial-level meeting on The Gambia, in which the Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office commended the government for its commitment to embedding SSR within the democratic transition. With the support of the PBF this included conducting gender-responsive security sector reform training for gender focal points in all the country's security institutions, and the rollout of a "gender caravan"

throughout the country that created space for security sector personnel to discuss gender issues with community and civil society representatives.

The second reference was during the October 2016 meeting on Financing for Peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan, whereby participants acknowledged PBF investment which supported the training of law enforcement officers on gender sensitivity, human rights and effective communication. This resulted in an increase of women in law enforcement by 11.9 percent over a three-year period.

Economic empowerment, women's recovery and protection strategies, and access to social infrastructure

References to these priority areas tend to be generic in nature and grouped within broader references encouraging the adoption of gender-sensitive peacebuilding approaches. Within the reviewed documents, only a handful of specific references on these priority areas were identified.

Among those on economic empowerment include the recounting of powerful testimonies by Burundi women mediators mitigating tensions at the community level who, during the 2019 Chair's visit to Burundi, underscored the importance of accompanying mediation efforts with income-generating activities. Importantly, in July 2020 the PBC held a dedicated consultative roundtable on women's economic empowerment in the Great Lakes region within the evolving context of COVID-19. Commission members heard of the likely widening social and economic inequalities faced by women in the region and that the restrictive measures put in place in response to the pandemic have further marginalized the economic participation of women especially in the agribusiness supply chain. The roundtable aimed to develop concrete recommendations on ways to support women-led businesses and ensure women's economic participation in post COVID-19 recovery efforts. This level of analysis and detailed focus on women's economic empowerment was not replicated in other documents reviewed.

As it relates to women's recovery and protection strategies, the PBC has acknowledged several times in the last couple of years, including most recently in April and July 2020, that violence against women peacebuilders impedes their ability to carry out their work and that they need safer environments to work within. Specifically, the PBC referenced the intimidation of female candidates in Sierra Leone in 2017 and in its 2019 advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate renewal recommended the mission in CAR enhance better communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement. In November 2016 the Chairs also called for the curtailment of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia. None of the documents included distinct mentions relating to access to basic social infrastructure.

[Strategic Action 3 – Engage men, including youth in gender-responsive peacebuilding](#)

The one mention of engaging with men and male youth in gender-responsive peacebuilding was from the Chair's Summary of a PBC meeting on peacebuilding in the Mano River in September 2016, where one delegation highlighted the relevance of engaging with men and boys. It is also important to note that references to youth peacebuilders rarely distinguish between young women and men, so this group of peacebuilders are conveyed as being one homogenous group.

Strategic Action 4 – The whole PBC should play an active role in the implementation

Among the actions encouraged within this fourth strategic area are for all members of the PBC to promote key messages on gender-responsive peacebuilding; the holding of yearly substantive meetings on gender responsive peacebuilding; and for the Commission's annual reports to have a dedicated section addressing the implementation of the gender strategy. The reviewed documents point to noticeable progress within this strategic action.

Of the 66 PBC meeting summaries which were reviewed, 44 of these (67 percent) include references of Commission members expressing support for gender responsive peacebuilding usually through emphasizing the importance of women's participation and the ongoing need to consult with women civil society representatives.

In October 2019 during an Ambassador-level meeting on the WPS agenda, Commission members stressed the importance of addressing the obstacles in implementing the agenda and for it to be at the heart of PBC discussions and field missions. In 2020, the PBC agreed to report annually on the implementation of the gender strategy and committed to continue holding an annual discussion on women and peacebuilding, a practice which started in 2019. It also held consultations on women and peacebuilding as part of the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review and is conducting three expert level consultations and an ambassador-level meeting considering the women, peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region. In January 2018, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting on gender-sensitive peacekeeping transitions.

Since the January 2018 report, the implementation of the gender strategy is included in the future actions and best practices sections of the reports. There has also been an increase in gender references in the last few years within the annual reports but as highlighted above, these largely provide support for gender-responsive building approaches and for consultations with women peacebuilders rather being informed by gender analysis.

Strategic Action 5: Include gender-responsive peacebuilding in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of all PBC field missions, in coordination with the host government and reporting back findings to the PBC members.

Available documents were reviewed relating visits to: Burundi and Tanzania in March 2017; Sierra Leone in December 2017; the World Bank to discuss the Central African Republic in February 2018; Chad March 2018; Burundi March 2018; Sierra Leone June 2018; Central African Republic in March 2019; Burundi 2019; the November 2019 joint PBC-SRSG UNOWA visit to the Mano River Union (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire); Colombia January 2020; and the virtual visit to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank on Liberia in May 2020.

There were no gender references or mentions of meeting with women civil society representatives in documents pertaining to the February 2018 visit to the World Bank on CAR; the March 2018 Burundi visit; or relating to the Sierra Leone visit in June 2018. All of the other visits do appear to have met with women civil society organizations and there has been to different degrees, promotion of local women's peacebuilding work and on the importance of women's inclusion.

Supporting women's engagement and participation in the 2020 Liberian senatorial election was noted as being among the objectives of the visit there in November 2019 as part of the joint PBC-SRSG UNOWAS trip to the Mano River Union. However, there was no additional analysis provided on some of the participatory challenges Liberian women may face. This could be an example of the challenge related to a lack of available gender analysis. During both the visits to Burundi in May 2019

and to CAR in March 2019, the Chairs of those country configurations went on field trips to see projects supported by the PBF dedicated to enhancing local women's mediation efforts and participation. As already noted above, the negative trend in women's participation in the Sierra Leone parliament was raised during the Chair's meetings with government and political parties during the visit in December 2017. These are all positive examples of integrating gender perspectives and advocacy during country field visits and this practice should be further encouraged and mainstreamed both during the visits and then in reports and further follow ups.

[Strategic Action 6: Strengthen the systematic coordination and sharing of information and approaches on gender-responsive peacebuilding](#)

This Strategic Area is progressing, particularly in terms of the Commission's engagement with the Security Council and sharing of information with other regional and intergovernmental bodies.

Of the 30 documents reviewed relating to the PBC's advisory role to or engagement with the Security Council, gender references were absent from eight of these (27 percent), with seven of these being between October 2016 and December 2018. Since 2019, only one document, the one in May 2019 summarizing an informal meeting to discuss recently adopted presidential statements on peacebuilding, have included gendered references. Recent good practices worth citing include the advice of the PBC to the Security Council on the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate in October 2019; as well as the statement by the PBC Burundi Configuration Chair also in October 2019 which called for a multidimensional, gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding, including good governance, justice, rule of law and economic development and which addresses root causes of conflict and removes barriers to women's meaningful participation, such as limited access to resources and economic insecurity. In the Commission's 2019 letter to the Security Council ahead of the WPS annual open debate, the PBC outlines its intention for closer collaboration with the Security Council Informal Expert Group on WPS.

Gender references have been included in all but one of the six documents reviewed relating to joint meetings between the PBC and ECOSOC since July 2018. Only the Chair's statement at the joint meeting in November 2018, discussing the linkages between climate change and the challenges of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel, does not include any gendered references. In contrast the December 2019 statement at the joint meeting by the PBC Chair emphasizes that the effects on climate change will most dramatically affect those living in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are women, despite the fact that only a very small percentage of development aid is provided to women-led environmental programs. At the July 2020 ECOSOC Management Segment meeting, the PBC Chair highlighted the importance of ensuring that the COVID-19 pandemic not reverse progress in gender equality, women's empowerment, and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. He further stressed the need to strengthen the engagement of women and youth in COVID-19 responses and improving respect for human rights, gender equality, and empowering women and youth.

Gender considerations during discussions with regional and intergovernmental bodies as well as with international financial institutions are outlined below in the thematic engagements and partnerships section.

Strategic Action 7: Advocate actively for dedicated technical expertise on gender-responsive peacebuilding as well as dedicated funding within the UN, and national and international partners.

While specific PBF investment projects are routinely referred to during meetings, especially by PBSO/DPPA leadership, there was minimal evidence within the reviewed documents of the Commission advocating for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise. Listed below are the only identified instances of such advocacy and focus placed on gendered resourcing:

- In March 2018, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting on financing the gender dimensions of peacebuilding, at which PBC members were briefed on the financial challenges and gaps hindering gender-responsive peacebuilding. (2019 annual report)
- During the April 2018 Security Council Open Debate on Youth, Peace and Security, the PBC Chair expressed the Commission's support for the work undertaken by young women and men peacebuilders in conflict-affected countries and acknowledged that their work is done with limited financial resources and that they face challenges in accessing funding streams.
- As part of a PBC-AUPSC informal interactive dialogue in July 2018, PBC members raised the need for better financing of empowerment mechanisms for youth and women.
- In its October 2019 letter to the Security Council ahead of the annual WPS open debate, the PBC Chair called for gender expertise, analysis and resources to be included in all UN global, regional and country level strategic planning initiatives and transition processes. The PBC also encourages continuous mobilization to adequately resource the implementation of the WPS agenda and to invest in women peacebuilders.
- Also in October 2019, the PBC advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate outlines PBF investment projects in the hope that this will catalyse further donor support on local peacebuilding initiatives, especially those focused on promoting the inclusion of women and young people.
- At the December 2019 joint ECOSOC-PBC meeting, the PBC Chair raised that the effects on climate change would be most dramatically felt by those living in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are female and this is then at odds with the fact that only a very small percentage of development aid is provided to women-led environmental programs.
- In a May 2020 letter update to PBC members, the Chair of the Burundi configuration wrote that the PBF is ready to consider project proposals that aim to scale up or replicate the peacebuilding work achieved by the women's mediation network, and he called on Member States to consider supporting or co-funding such initiatives.
- As part of consultations to inform an Ambassador level meeting on WPS in the Great Lakes, a virtual roundtable was convened in July 2020 on women's economic empowerment which among its aims was to develop recommendations for improved and coordinated advocacy for resource mobilization to support women-led peacebuilding.
- The PBC outlined the substantial lack of funding for women's organizations and recommended adequate funding for women-led peacebuilding organizations and networks in its letter to the PGA and President of the Security on the peacebuilding architecture review.

Annex Two -Country and Region-Specific Gender Considerations

Burkina Faso

There were four reviewed documents relating to Burkina Faso: the informal interactive dialogue with the Security Council on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin in June 2017; and country-specific Ambassadorial-level meetings in May 2019; September 2019 and March 2020. All of these included broad support for gender-responsive peacebuilding and women's participation in peacebuilding efforts. The March 2020 meeting included a briefing by representative of women's civil society organization in Burkina Faso. None of the documents captured any gender analysis or outlined what the gender responsive peacebuilding priorities for Burkina Faso are.

Burundi

There were 13 documents on Burundi reviewed dating back to October 2016 to the most recent being the Configuration Chair's letter to PBC members in May 2020. Four of these (31 percent) are without any gender language, the last one being the Statement of the Chair of the Burundi Configuration to the Security Council in November 2018.

Following the visit to Burundi in February 2020, the Chair of the Burundi Configuration highlighted during a configuration meeting and to the Security Council, that there were more women registered voters than men in the upcoming election. Member States were also encouraged to support or co-fund initiatives aimed at enhancing or replacing the peacebuilding work undertaken by the women's mediation network who the delegation again met with during the visit.

The May 2019 report on the Chair of Configuration visit to Burundi recounts a field trip to a PBF supported project jointly implemented by UN WOMEN, IOM and UNDP, where the delegation heard from local women on the importance of accompanying mediation efforts with income-generating activities to further strengthen women's ability to participate in peacebuilding efforts and within the political sphere. The report's recommendation on reconciliation and dialogue calls for local-level initiatives focusing on women and youth to be continued and expanded. However, there are no gender elements or sex disaggregated data in the report's other recommendations on the 2020 elections; socioeconomic development; realization of all human rights; or relating to the orderly and voluntary return of Burundian refugees.

The October 2019 statement to the Security Council outlines the need for a multidimensional, gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding including good governance, justice, rule of law and economic development, and which should also promote addressing root causes and removing barriers to women's meaningful participation, such as limited access to resources and economic insecurity. This is a marked improvement from earlier statements in 2017 (which included no references at all) and the one in 2018 whose only gender mention was a reference to a PBF initiative which among its aims was to address gender-based violence.

Central African Republic

There has been a notable improvement in gender references in Central African Republic documents, especially as there was no gender language in any of these from October 2016 to February 2018. These account for over 60 percent of documents on CAR and include the 2017 and 2018 statements to the Security Council; the 2018 visit to the World Bank; and the 2016 and 2017 joint meetings with the Security Council.

Then in August 2018, the PBC highlighted as positive developments the increased number of women mediators and the Parliament's recent discussions on setting a quota for female politicians. The 2019 visit to Bangui involved meeting with women working on a PBF funded project led by UNDP and UN Women on promoting women's political participation and engagement in national dialogue processes and which was exploring new ways to ensure women's equal participation in the implementation of the peace agreement and at upcoming elections. Following the visit, PBC members further emphasized the need to ensure the inclusion of women and youth in local peacebuilding efforts.

Finally, the advice to Security Council on the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate renewal should be considered as good practice and further built on and replicated across other mandate renewal processes. In its advice, the PBC calls for concrete way to be found to involve women and young people in the appropriation and implementation of the peace agreement and for MINUSCA to enhance better communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement. It also encourages the Security Council to champion the equal participation and representation of women in the elections.

Colombia

The PBC discussed Colombia at a meeting in November 2017 where two women Colombian civil society leaders shared their personal stories of living through the conflict. Then in January 2020, the Commission held an Ambassadorial meeting in Cartagena, Colombia. On the margins of the official panel, all PBC members visited an exhibition of products of former combatants, survivors, and communities, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, and the SRSF for Colombia provided context. Many of these representatives were grassroots women, entrepreneurs and peacebuilders who had a chance to discuss with PBC members opportunities and challenges in their reintegration and entrepreneurship efforts. During the official panel, a member of a victims' association who was also at the exhibition, presented her personal trajectory to craft making and entrepreneurship. She stressed the importance of supporting and empowering women peacebuilders at the local level. PBC members' interaction with women former combatants and survivors who are now entrepreneurs or craftswomen was described as a unique experience and an example of a new form of engagement which should be considered as good practice.

The Gambia

Between April 2017 and July 2020, there were eight available documents relating to The Gambia and only one of these, on the April 2017 meeting, did not include any gender references. There is a noticeable improvement in gender considerations across the five documents from May 2019 onwards.

In May 2019 the ASG for Peacebuilding Support stressed the testimonies of women as fundamental to the integrity of the transitional justice process and PBC members further welcomed the promotion and participation of women in all areas of life and in the justice system, including the number of women judges and TRRC commissioners. PBC members described the participation of women as witnesses, senior officials and decision makers in the judiciary sector as unleashing the true potential of women in all aspects of peacebuilding. These comments are the most detailed support the PBC has given towards gender responsive transitional justice across all of the contexts reviewed. Similar messages were reiterated during the October 2019 meeting on The Gambia,

where the Deputy Head of PBSO/DPPA also outlined specific gender-responsive security sector reform initiatives which were being undertaken with PBF support.

In the June 2020 meeting focusing on the impact of COVID-19 in The Gambia, PBC members acknowledged the particularly severe consequences for women and highlighted the pivotal role played by women in promoting economic development and in helping the society address challenges emerging from the pandemic. They committed to work with The Gambia in further promoting the critical role played by women and youth in peacebuilding and in addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. The June 2020 Ambassadorial meeting on The Gambia echoed similar sentiments and noted that the pandemic risked exacerbating inequalities, hence the need to focus on human security, gender equality and youth engagement as part of addressing the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

Guinea-Bissau

There were 18 documents reviewed on Guinea-Bissau including those relating to country specific meetings and statements, as well as meetings in which Guinea-Bissau was one of several contexts considered. Only two of these, (the October 2016 meeting with the Security Council on Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia and the April 2017 Security Council meeting covering the Sahel, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia) omit any gender language.

Since August 2017, the PBC has consistently expressed its support for PBF projects aimed at strengthening the participation of women and youth in Guinea Bissau's peacebuilding efforts. Representatives of the Women's Council, formerly the Women's Facilitator Group, briefed the PBC in August 2017 and August 2018, and the Chair of Guinea-Bissau Configuration also met with them during country visits. The PBC has repeatedly supported and welcomed efforts to increase the number of women in Guinea-Bissau's parliament, including the December 2018 promulgation of the Gender Parity Law which established a quota of 35 percent women candidates for parliament and representation in public sector institutions. The PBC supported advocacy efforts leading up to the bill being considered, and then welcomed its adoption. In September 2019, the Commission further commended the 11 women who were appointed to the Government and further encouraged similar progress in other institutions.

In November 2019, the Chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration while reporting on the recent visit there, advised that interlocutors in Guinea-Bissau had acknowledged the continuous engagement of the PBC and the catalytic contributions of the PBF and expressed appreciation for ongoing initiatives that aimed to empower women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. Guinea-Bissau is a positive example of the whole of the PBC engaging in ongoing promotion of women's meaningful participation within peacebuilding and political processes. During the June 2020 meeting, Commission members were briefed on how the PBF projects in Guinea-Bissau had adjusted their workplans or reoriented activities to respond to new tension triggers as a result of COVID-19 and to empower youth and women leaders to play a key role in peaceful sensitization and community response. Commission members welcomed the flexibility of the PBF in the context of COVID-19 in continuing to support women in political and peacebuilding processes and underscored the need to ensure that important peacebuilding gains including rule of law, security sector reform and gender equality are safeguarded during the UN transition. In his August 2020 statement to the Security Council, the Configuration Chair also acknowledged that among the COVID-19 risks in Guinea-Bissau was the worsening of gender inequalities.

Liberia

Of the 15 documents reviewed which considered Liberia, three (20%) of these did not include any gender references, the last one being in March 2018. Since October 2016, the noticeable gender priority has been on promoting women's meaningful participation in the 2017 and 2020 elections. This is a clearer priority than in other country contexts reviewed. Among the objectives of a joint PBC, SRSG-UNOWAS, PBSO/DPPA visit to Mano River Union in November 2019, was to map future PBC support in respect to the upcoming Liberian senatorial election processes, in order to achieve peaceful elections. Women's engagement and participation was noted as being an important focus in this regard. There is no analysis however detailing the particular participatory challenges Liberian women may face or how lessons learnt from the 2017 election can be applied to strengthen women's participation rate in 2020. Though this may be included during the scheduled October meeting to discuss the senatorial elections. The reviewed documents also point to PBC advocacy being undertaken in support of domestic violence laws needing to be passed.

It is important to highlight the strong gender emphasis which has been placed in the three 2020 meetings held on Liberia and the impact of COVID-19. This includes the virtual visit in May to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, where the Chair of the Liberia Configuration stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach in the response, including considering the situation for women and girls. This is also significant as this appears to be the first meeting with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund where gender responsive peacebuilding was discussed. At an April 2020 meeting, PBC members also noted the particular situation for women related to the lockdown measures. In June, the Chair of the Liberia Configuration held a virtual discussion with Liberian civil society organizations to hear how local organizations were being impacted by the pandemic. Among the concerns raised by the participants were the decrease in availability of essential services and that the pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities. An assessment was being undertaken to ascertain how women-led small and medium sized enterprises had been affected. The Chair of the Configuration echoed participants' calls relating to the impact the pandemic was having on women and youth and the need to support their organizations.

While the reviewed documents describe regular engagement with women civil society organizations and PBC Liberia Configuration, either through being invited to brief PBC meetings or holding meetings with them during country visits, this dedicated consultation with civil society appears to be the first of its kind. This is a new practice which could be replicated across different PBC configurations and country or regional considerations as a way of further emphasizing the perspectives of women civil society representatives.

Sierra Leone

There were eight documents reviewed on Sierra Leone between December 2016 and November 2019. Of these only the summary on the working level visit of the Sierra Leone configuration to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in June 2018, does not include any gender language within it. During the joint PBC, SRSG-UNOWAS, PBSO/DPPA visit to Mano River Union in November 2019, it was stated that supporting the empowerment of women and youth in political processes has been a key focus of the PBC in its engagement with Sierra Leone. PBC members in the last couple of years have regularly conveyed broad statements of support for the Government's efforts to enhance inclusiveness and empower women and youth, but no further analysis or detail is provided. The last document with any gender specificity in it was the December 2017 visit summary whereby the Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration emphasized with government and other political party representatives the then negative trend in women's parliament which was well below

the 30 percent goal; the intimidation of female candidates and allegations of some politicians paying for Rites of Passage ceremonies of girls in exchange for votes.

Central African Region

The PBC convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting for the first time on Central Africa region on 9 June 2020, in order to discuss the regional impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding. The Head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa outlined how the pandemic was exacerbating long standing regional challenges. The Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) described the increase in gender inequalities occurring during the lockdown period due to women's increasing domestic workload, an increase in domestic violence against women and the risks of sexual violence against women and young girls, particularly in conflict areas. Member States from the region expressed concern at the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on women and girls as well as operational restrictions in the work of local civil society and peacebuilding organizations. In his Concluding remarks the PBC Chair called on all UN country teams in the region to break silos and join forces with the private sectors and NGOs to help the governments in the region to address youth employment and protect women and girls.

Great Lakes

Guiding PBC discussions on the Great Lakes is the UN's Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework in which the importance of gender mainstreaming is emphasized, as is the need to empower women as economic agents and promote their participation and leadership in conflict resolution and recovery processes. Following a July 2020 Ambassadorial meeting on the Great Lakes region, where among other issues members of the Commission emphasized the pivotal role that women and youth could play as key agents of change and the need for the WPS agenda to be fully integrated into regional peacebuilding efforts, it was agreed to hold a dedicated meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region later in 2020. To inform this meeting, three virtual dialogues have been planned on: women as agents of change for socio-economic transformation; effective measures to guarantee women's meaningful political participation and their contribution to peacebuilding; and on prevention of all forms of violence against women.

The background documents prepared for these dialogues contain a new level of specificity in their gender references. For instance, they note that women in the Great Lakes Region make up 70 percent of the workforce both in small-scale business enterprises and in agriculture and that the restrictive measures put in place in response to the pandemic will further marginalize the economic participation of women in the agribusiness supply chain. In regard to the second session on violence against women held on 11 August, the concept note outlined that gender inequality, economic insecurity and poverty-related stress are key elements in the relationship between GBV and the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants heard the need for Member States to take measures during the pandemic to ensure that monitoring, reporting and legal systems continue to function, and to follow up by providing robust support to women survivors of violence. During this second virtual session speakers also outlined the importance of responses being informed by intersectional gender analysis.

Among those participating in the virtual dialogues include regional women leaders, government representatives, members of the Advisory Board for WPS in the Great Lakes Region, women entrepreneurs and business leaders, regional Fora and civil society representatives, as well as international partners. The virtual dialogues and the Ambassadorial meeting aim to develop recommendations on how to fully integrate the WPS agenda in peacebuilding and development

efforts in the Great Lakes region and ensure effective participation of women in the design of gender sensitive policies and programmes in the response to and recovery from the COVID -19.

This is the first time such a process focusing specifically on the regional implementation of the WPS agenda and how to strengthen the role of women in peacebuilding efforts is being undertaken by the PBC.

Mano River Union

In November 2019 the PBC visited the Mano River Union countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire to inform renewed engagement with the Commission and identify possible avenues of support. Based on the trip's concept note and meeting summary discussing the visit, some gender dimensions were integrated within the three-country visit. For instance, among the stated objectives of the Liberian portion of the visit, was to support women's engagement and participation in the upcoming election. However, no additional information was captured on the potential participatory challenges facing women in the Liberian electoral context. In Sierra Leone, the Chair recounted a meeting with an NGO working to empower adolescent girls, which called on the Commission to amplify girls' voices and support innovation in grassroots programming with and for girls. For the Côte d'Ivoire section of the visit, documents highlighted the PBC's ongoing support to the National Peacebuilding Programmes which among its priorities included women's and youth participation in peacebuilding. Following the trip PBC members emphasized the importance of gender equality in decision making mechanisms at the local and national levels, however it does not appear that the trip led to more detailed considerations on how the Commission could further support gendered dimensions of peacebuilding across Mano River Union countries.

Lake Chad Basin, West Africa and the Sahel

Documents relating to Lake Chad Basin, West Africa and the Sahel include the December 2018 statement to the Security Council on the Sahel; the December 2019 advice on the UNOWAS mandate renewal; the July 2019 meeting on Chad; and the Chair's Summary on the annual meeting on the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and Mano River Union in December 2019.

For the Lake Chad Basin, PBC discussions are informed by the August 2018 [regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region](#). This calls for gender to be mainstreamed throughout all stabilization work in the region, for there to be effective protection measures that empower women and girls as beneficiaries, and for the full and effective inclusion and participation of women and girls in the stabilization, recovery and resilience process. Similarly, for the Sahel the Commission is guided by the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) framework, which also calls for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives and lists as one of the priorities the empowerment of women and youth for peace and development in the Sahel.

The 2018 PBC meeting on Sahel included briefings by women civil society representatives however details of their statements or key calls are not included in the meeting summary. The advice to the Security Council on the UNOWAS mandate renewal lists low levels of gender equality as being among the ongoing serious challenges facing parts of West Africa and the Sahel and calls for the mission to support for meaningful participation of women and youth in political processes and peacebuilding efforts in the region. During the July 2019 meeting PBC members expressed their support for efforts relating to gender equality following a briefing by the Minister for Economy and Development Planning for the Republic of Chad, on laws which had been adopted to promote gender parity, and to prohibit child marriage and human trafficking.

At the December 2019 annual session on the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and the Mano River Union, the Chair briefed the commission on his meetings with women's organizations during the Mano River Union visit and how women mediators are championing dispute resolution in their communities. The Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission spoke of the need to empower and promote the inclusion of women as well as build their capacity. The Commission also heard from a women civil society representative from Sierra Leone who is working to empower adolescent girls. She described entrenched practices of discrimination and oppression experienced by women and girls and her organization's work to combat discriminatory practices by amplifying girls' voices, providing financial resources, building solidarity between and across girls' movements, and supporting innovation in grassroots programming with and for girls. At the meeting PBC members emphasized that the inclusion of gender equality in decision making mechanisms at the local and national levels is vital for peacebuilding.

Pacific Islands

In the period under review, the PBC has met twice on Papua New Guinea (PNG), in October 2019 and July 2020. During the October meeting the ASG for Peacebuilding Support addressed the importance of women's full participation in the upcoming referendum in Bougainville. He also outlined two PBF supported projects which saw the establishment of a quota for women in all of the regional and urban community governments across Bougainville and the holding of the Bougainville Regional Women's Unification Conference to discuss issues concerning women across faction lines. At the meeting Commission members also stressed the importance of women participating in both the referendum and broader peacebuilding efforts. During the July meeting, PBC members commended the commitment of the PNG government to women's representation in parliament and emphasized the need for further progress on women's political participation, gender equality and women's empowerment.

In addition, on the 28 July 2020 the PBC held a meeting on the impact of the pandemic in the Pacific. The meeting summary indicates that PBC members were briefed on the region having among the highest rates of domestic violence and intimate partner violence in the world and the need for response measures to guarantee fundamental human rights, including gender equality, political participation of women, and access to justice. A woman civil society leader from Fiji also told the PBC that COVID-19 had led to an increase in economic insecurity, domestic and community violence. She called for strengthened gender-sensitive analysis throughout all phases of the response, greater linkages with the human security approach and for flexible peacebuilding funding to reflect the changing nature of threats.

Thematic Engagements and Partnerships

As well as holding country and regional specific meetings, the PBC has also convened thematic discussions on youth, peace and security; leadership, accountability and capacities; the women peace and security agenda; South-South cooperation; building and sustaining peace and on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding. Engagements with regional organizations such as the African Union and international financial institutions represent other important opportunities to promote gender responsive peacebuilding approaches.

During the September 2018 PBC meeting on leadership, accountabilities and capacities, Member States welcomed the Secretary-General's UN gender parity strategy and emphasized that women's leadership is vital to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, there were no references relating to accountability measures to ensure the full implementation of PBC's gender strategy. The

only gender reference included in the Chair's remarks to the March 2019 dialogue, convened by the General Assembly and PBC on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, was in relation to the Commission's continued implementation of its gender strategy. The Chair's summary of the Ambassadorial-level meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, held September 2019, omits any mentions to gendered peacebuilding.

Unsurprisingly, the October 2019 meeting on the women, peace and security agenda is vastly different in its gender considerations. Senior UN and regional organization officials, as well as women civil society representatives spoke of the need to: bridge the divide between rhetoric and practice; for Member States and the UN to better address the root-causes of gender inequality; leadership accountability for the implementation of the WPS agenda including through targeted data collection, joined-up analysis and strategic planning; and to strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding processes and access to economic resources. Member States urged the PBC through its convening and advisory role to provide a platform for discussion of the WPS agenda with a range of different stakeholders, including regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions and civil society and called for the WPS agenda to be heard of at the PBC discussions and during field visits. The stark contrast in thematic meetings a month apart highlights the importance of ensuring gender perspectives are integrated into other thematic meetings which are not dedicated to gender.

As part of the February 2020 meeting on youth, peace and security, PBC members heard from a civil society leader from Sierra Leone who spoke of his work leading a feminist organization which designs and implements grassroots programmes with and for girls. PBC members recognized the positive contribution of young women and men in promoting peace; encouraged more countries to adopt national action plans on youth, peace and security; and emphasized allowing young peacebuilders especially young women peacebuilders in rural areas, to be part of decision-making processes. This is one of the few meetings referring to youth peacebuilders which distinguishes between young women, girls, men and boys. Similar to how women should not be viewed as one homogenous group, PBC considerations on youth, peace and security will be strengthened if they identify and address the differentiated needs and participatory challenges faced by diverse young women and men. Nearly all PBC documents reviewed refer to youth as one general demographic.

Engagements with the World Bank in 2018, including on the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone, did not include any gender references. However, in the report on the virtual visit to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on Liberia in May 2020, the PBC chair stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach to the COVID 19 response. The July 2018 interactive dialogue with the African Union also promoted gender-responsive building efforts, the meaningful of women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as the need for increased financing of empowerment mechanisms for women and youth.

Since April 2020, the PBC has met repeatedly to consider the implications COVID-19 is having on peacebuilding efforts generally as well as across West Africa and the Sahel; the Central African Region; the Great Lakes region; the Pacific and specifically in The Gambia; Liberia; and Papua New Guinea. These meetings have all acknowledged the disproportionate impact the pandemic will have on women and youth and that this health crisis is not gender neutral and is in fact amplifying existing inequalities including those relating to gender. These meetings are being guided in part by the April 2020 [UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19](#), which outlines that across all contexts gender equality and the inclusion of women in the response will be critical to avoid any backsliding. The framework also stresses the importance of applying a gender lens during the design of socio-economic responses, given the role that women are playing as frontline

healthcare workers, including healthcare providers and caregivers, as community leaders and in the informal economy.

As part of a PBC meeting on the socio-economic response to COVID-19 in July 2020, the PBC was briefed on the role of women in sustaining livelihoods especially as small business owners and that investing in women entrepreneurs would be critical for economic recovery. During the July 2020 ECOSOC Management Segment meeting, the PBC Chair raised the importance of ensuring that the pandemic does not reverse progress on gender equality, women's empowerment and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In addition, he outlined consultations undertaken by the PBC including with women civil society representatives and the need to further strengthen the engagement of women and youth in COVID-19 responses. The PBC Chair then reiterated these calls during the 12 August Security Council Open Debate on peacebuilding and sustaining peace challenges caused by pandemics.

Overall PBC meetings which have considered the impact of COVID-19 either in country or region-specific discussions or during broader thematic meeting have included noticeably more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations with local women's organizations. This approach paves the way for even more nuanced promotions of gender responsive peacebuilding efforts in which specific gendered priorities are identified and addressed.