



Improving the impact of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and enhancing the synergy of the Peacebuilding Architecture

Input Paper for the 2025 (Twenty-year) Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture

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Acknowledgements



Norwegian Institute
of International
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The co-authors of this input paper are with the Peace, Conflict and Development Research Group at the NUPI. The research that informed this input paper was undertaken by the NUPI Center for UN and Global Governance and supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Publisher:	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Copyright:	© Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2024 Published under the CC-BY-NC-SA licence
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Contents

- Executive Summary7
- Introduction9
- Improving the impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Commission..... 10
 - 1. Strategic Focus 10
 - 2. PBC Working methods..... 11
 - 3. Enhance learning and adaptation 14
 - 4. Improving synergy between PBC, PBF & PBSO..... 15
 - 5. Leveraging Thematic Focus Areas to Enhance the Peacebuilding Architecture’s Impact 16
- Conclusion 21

Executive Summary

The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture – consisting of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) - was established in 2005. In 2025, 20 years after the PBA was established, the Architecture will undergo a review. As part of the preparations for the review the UN Secretary-General has appointed five Independent Eminent Persons who will submit their assessment on the work and impact of the Peacebuilding Architecture to the Secretary-General and Member States late in 2024.

This Input Paper, by researchers from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) serves as an input to the work of the Independent Eminent Persons, the report of the Secretary-General and the Member State review process. It is informed by NUPI's research on peacebuilding and related areas, including the research undertaken in support of the previous 5-, 10- and 15-year reviews of the Peacebuilding Architecture. The research on which this paper is based was financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the analysis and recommendations contained in this paper does not necessarily reflect the position of Norway.

The main challenge that has consistently been identified over the years, including in previous reviews of the Peacebuilding Architecture, is the perceived lack of impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Commission. In our assessment, the Peacebuilding Commission's attention to countries and regions are too ad hoc and fleeting to generate meaningful information and analysis. This is one of the main areas that we single out for improvement. This does not mean that the PBC had no impact. The PBC has accompanied the transition and peace processes in several countries over the years, including especially Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This political attention has helped to maintain and strengthen engagement in these countries by the UN system and the wider international peacebuilding and development ecosystem. However, apart from these few cases, the PBC has not been able to generate the kind of general leadership on peacebuilding, or country specific information and analysis, that the UN Security Council, ECOSOC, the Human Rights Council, or the broader peacebuilding and development community, could meaningfully make use of in their work or deliberations.

This input paper therefore focuses on providing a set of practical recommendations for how the impact of the Peacebuilding Commission can be improved, and how the synergy of the Peacebuilding Architecture can be enhanced. Four areas are highlighted, namely: (1) maintaining strategic focus on addressing the underlying drivers and causes of conflict, (2) enhancing the quality of information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Architecture, (3) strengthening synergy and coherence across the UN system and within the global peacebuilding and development ecosystem, and (4) stimulating UN system learning and adaptation.

Strategic focus: The role of the Peacebuilding Commission is to prevent conflict and sustain peace by directing the UN system to address the underlying drivers and causes of conflict in particular countries and regions. The more the Peacebuilding Commission remain true to its strategic focus, and generates the information, analysis and actions that operationalise how the UN can support countries in sustaining peace, the more it will enhance its relevance and added value to the UN system and the broader international peacebuilding and development ecosystem.

Enhancing the quality of information and analysis: The Peacebuilding Commission needs to engage more systematically and holistically with countries, regions and thematic areas on its agenda. It can do so by convening briefings where experts from across the whole-of-society spectrum are invited to take stock of peace process or transition progress, and to map and analyse drivers and root causes. By convening experts from a wide range of stakeholders in and outside of the UN system to share

their analysis and evaluations, the Commission will encourage greater integration, synergy and coherence across the UN system and broader peacebuilding and development community, as well as between local, national and international stakeholders. We recommend that the Commission improve the quality and content of its meeting summaries and collect and edit these in the form of annual reports on countries, regions and thematic areas. These would serve as a source of synthesized information, analysis and evaluation on system-wide peacebuilding progress that does not exist elsewhere in the UN system. They would also generate knowledge outputs that are associated with, and thus help to strengthen the relevance of the PBC. In this way the PBC will generate information and analysis by convening the space where the UN system and other experts provide verbal and written inputs, which are in turn synthesized and summarised by the PBC secretariat and with the help and oversight of a PBC Chair, the relevant Vice-chair and penholder, where relevant.

Stimulate learning and adaptation: To be more relevant and impactful the Peacebuilding Architecture needs to be evidenced-based. It should be guided by the latest research and knowledge available about specific contexts, and peacebuilding practices in general. The Peacebuilding Commission can become a catalyst for system-wide learning. This could be achieved by regularly convening briefings that aim to take stock of the evidenced-based knowledge that is available in the UN system and the wider peacebuilding and development ecosystem, including local and indigenous knowledge as well as academic knowledge. The Peacebuilding Commission can enhance its focus on knowledge generation, learning and adaptation. This could be done by emphasizing the fulfilment of its mandate to develop and share good practices in peacebuilding, including through assigning a special responsibility on knowledge, learning and adaptation to one of the Vice-Chairs. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission could convene an annual peacebuilding research and knowledge conference with the global peacebuilding research community and other knowledge holders to take stock of the latest research on peacebuilding and other forms of peacebuilding knowledge.

In order to more systematically advise the Peacebuilding Architecture, including on arranging the annual peacebuilding research and knowledge conference, the PBSO, with direction from the Peacebuilding Commission, can establish a global research advisory panel that can provide advice to the Peacebuilding Commission and other parts of the Architecture on an ongoing basis.

Improving synergy between PBC, PBF & PBSO: The Peacebuilding Architecture can increase support for its efforts to enhance its relevance and impact by leveraging the synergies and complementarities of its different parts. It can also leverage support from the PBSO, UN Secretariat, and whole-of-UN system for the overall functioning of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Leveraging thematic focus areas to enhance impact and relevance: The Peacebuilding Commission can serve as a forum where UN Member States, the UN system and the wider peacebuilding and development community can engage in an ongoing reflection on how focussing on certain thematic areas can enhance a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding. There is a wide range of thematic areas that the PBC has in the past and can discuss in future, including topics such as transitional justice, the role of education, the rights and roles of indigenous peoples in peacebuilding, security sector reform and many others. In this paper we will focus in on three areas, namely Women, Peace and Security (WPS); Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and peacebuilding.

When undertaken together, a renewed commitment to the strategic focus of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the changes to the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission recommended in this input paper, should help to enhance the quality of the information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Commission. This should in turn improve the impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Architecture.

Introduction

The twenty-year review of the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) is taking place in a particular geopolitical context that creates both challenges and opportunities for the review process. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, one of the implications of the prevailing geopolitical landscape is that Member States have to review the Peacebuilding Architecture in a context where the international peace and security challenges are more complex, multidimensional and uncertain than what was the case during its establishment in 2005. As the negotiations leading up to the Pact of Future has shown, one effect has been that Member States are more polarised and fragmented than ever. This may mean that the political space for innovative and far-reaching reforms of the Peacebuilding Architecture in 2025 may be limited.

As the same time, many Member States see the Peacebuilding Commission as a Member State body that occupy a unique space in the broader UN peace and security architecture. Because it is seen as more representative and democratic than the Security Council, many UN Member States value the Commission as a space where states can seek to build consensus and engage in dialogue on key issues on the UN's peacebuilding agenda. In this context, the Pact for the Future, envisage a strengthened Peacebuilding Commission as an important building block for a stronger and more effective multilateral system. There is thus widespread support among UN Member States for strengthening the role of the Peacebuilding Commission. The critical question is how this can be achieved.

This input paper therefore focuses on providing a set of practical recommendations for how the impact of the UN Peacebuilding Commission can be improved, and how the synergies of the Peacebuilding Architecture can be enhanced.

The main challenge that has consistently been identified over the years, including in the 2010, 2015 and 2020 reviews of the Peacebuilding Architecture are the perceived lack of impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Commission. For example, a widespread perception among members of the Security Council is that the advice provided by the Peacebuilding Commission does not add much value to the deliberations of the Council, as the advice and knowledge shared by the Peacebuilding Commission rarely introduces new information, analysis or insights.

In our assessment, the Peacebuilding Commission's attention to countries and regions are too ad hoc and fleeting to generate meaningful information and analysis, and this is one of the main areas we single out for improvement. There are many other areas such as peacebuilding financing, and enhancing relations with regional organisations like the African Union, that the review process should consider. However, we have opted to focus in on the information and analysis generated by the PBC, as this is closely linked to its perceived relevance and impact. Furthermore, improving the quality and analysis of the information generated by the Peacebuilding Commission cannot happen without also addressing a number of related aspects. We therefore offer recommendations in several related areas, including (1) maintaining strategic focus on addressing the underlying drivers and causes of conflict, (2) enhancing the quality of information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Architecture, (3) strengthening synergy and coherence across the UN system and within the global peacebuilding and development ecosystem, and (4) stimulating UN system learning and adaptation.

We believe that most of the recommendations that follow can be achieved with no or little additional financial resources, by making better use of the existing capacities within the UN system and wider peacebuilding and development community, as well as by distributing the workload among the broader PBC membership.

Improving the impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Commission

1. Strategic Focus

In the 1990s, several countries, including Liberia and Sierra Leone, relapsed into violent conflict after the withdrawal of relatively small and short-lived UN peacekeeping operations. This contributed to the thinking that emerged in the negotiations that led to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 that a part of the UN system needs to remain engaged with countries in transition when they are no longer on the UN Security Council agenda. To meet this need, the Peacebuilding Commission was established in 2005.

The strategic focus of the Peacebuilding Commission was thus intended to be on consolidating peace processes and supporting transitions. In 2016, following the review of the PBA after its first 10 years in existence, twin resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council further refined and broadened the role of the PBC to focus on assisting countries to sustain peace. The main instrument of the Peacebuilding Commission is political accompaniment that helps to maintain attention by the UN Member States and UN system on preventing conflict, and sustaining and supporting peace and transition processes. The Peacebuilding Commission, through the way it gives attention to transition or peace processes in the countries or regions on its agenda, stimulates the attention of the UN system and the wider peacebuilding and development ecosystem to remain focused on addressing the underlying drivers and root causes of the conflict.

The comparative advantage of the Peacebuilding Commission is thus that whilst the UN Security Council and other parts of the UN system is focused on dealing with the political, security and humanitarian symptoms of violent conflicts, the Peacebuilding Commission is focused on their underlying causes. The more the Peacebuilding Commission remain true to its strategic focus, and generates the information, analysis and actions that operationalise how the UN can support countries to sustain peace, the more it will enhance its relevance and added value to the UN system.

There are three pathways through which the Peacebuilding Commission can help the UN system and global peacebuilding and development community to focus on underlying drivers and causes:

- The first is political accompaniment. Through convening meetings on a specific country or region, the Peacebuilding Commission can generate information and analysis on the drivers and causes of conflict, or on tensions that may lead to violent conflict if not addressed, and in so doing, focus international and UN system attention on what needs to be done to support these countries to sustain peace.
- The second is to enhance the strategic coherence of the UN system and global peacebuilding and development community. This could be done by convening key national and international actors engaged in the system, in order to take stock of progress achieved (or lack thereof). In that way the Peacebuilding Commission can serve as a forum where the international system can share information, track progress and be held accountable.
- The third is to help the UN system and the global peacebuilding and development ecosystem to learn and adapt, with the objective of enhancing overall effectiveness. The Peacebuilding Commission can be a hub for generating the information and analysis needed for country-specific

peacebuilding actions to be based on evidence, lessons identified and results. The Peacebuilding Commission can stimulate learning and adaptation through the way it convenes meetings on countries, regions and thematic areas and the way in which it captures and shares information and analysis.

Through these pathways the Peacebuilding Commission can provide strategic direction to the UN system and global peacebuilding and development ecosystem. This can be achieved by improving the working methods of the PBC and by enhancing greater synergies among parts of the Peacebuilding Architecture and the wider peacebuilding and development ecosystem. The aims should be to:

1. Maintain strategic focus on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace by addressing the underlying drivers and causes of conflict,
2. Enhance the quality of information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Architecture,
3. Strengthen synergies and coherence across the UN system and within the global peacebuilding and development ecosystem, including regional organisations like the African Union, and
4. Stimulate UN system learning and adaptation.

In addition, as the central hub of the global peacebuilding ecosystem the Peacebuilding Commission should play a leading role in generating a new shared understanding of peacebuilding, as well as the role of the multilateral system in supporting peacebuilding in specific countries and regions. Many new peacebuilding and development actors, including Member States, new IFIs, and new funds, have become active in this field over the last few years and are likely to continue to emerge. The Peacebuilding Commission is ideally positioned to bring traditional and new peacebuilding and development actors together such as the UN Member States as well as other international, national and local peacebuilding organisations, foundations, IFIs and funds. This could be useful as a way to share knowledge about how these actors understand and evaluate peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Commission can serve as the forum where the UN system and global peacebuilding and development ecosystem reflect on and develop a shared understanding, based on existing international law and principles, of how the UN system and the broader global community can best support national and local peacebuilding.

2. PBC Working methods

In order to enhance the ways that the Peacebuilding Commission can pursue the objectives set out above, it needs to innovate its working methods to generate more ownership and responsibility across the wider membership of the Commission. It also needs to enhance the quality of the information and analysis it generates and stimulate learning and adaptation.

2.1 Distribute responsibility and ownership and create room for greater innovation and creativity

One of the shortcomings of the current working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission is that much depends on the Chair of the Commission. There are limitations to the time and energy that any chair can invest in the Peacebuilding Commission, considering the many other responsibilities of Permanent Representatives and missions. Furthermore, the central role of the chair does not incentivise other members of the Peacebuilding Commission to step forward and contribute.

The good news is that the Peacebuilding Commission has already decided to partly address this challenge by increasing the number of Vice-Chairs in 2025. Whilst this is an important change to the way the Commission works, we recommend that the Peacebuilding Commission should also pursue several other methods and instruments for broadening the ownership, responsibility and engagement of the work of the Commission. Involving more members in a variety of roles will generate wider ownership, more creativity and innovation as well as more activities and outputs.

There are many roles and tasks that the Chair, the Vice-Chairs and other members of the Peacebuilding Commission need to perform. Some of these can be undertaken by voluntary groups that support a (Vice-)Chair on a country or theme, or other arrangements such as penholders, mentors, liaisons and conveners where a specific Member State, or a pair of members, are tasked with following up on a specific topic, under the overall leadership of the Chair or one of the Vice-Chairs. The aim of these arrangements is to help to share the burden of work across a wider number of the members of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Some of these roles include taking responsibility for:

- Taking stock of peacebuilding support to specific countries or regions, and supporting Member States to sustain peace. Whilst avoiding the shortcomings of the earlier Country Configuration approach to this task, (Vice-)Chair(s) or other members should take responsibility for following up with specific countries or regions. Member States with previous experience of transitioning out of conflict can volunteer to accompany fellow Member States as mentors that can provide advice on how best to leverage the Peacebuilding Architecture, wider UN system and global peacebuilding and development support. Penholders can play a role in overseeing the production of meeting summaries and annual reports or other written products and conveners can take responsibility for organising briefings.
- Managing relations with and providing advice to the UN Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Human Rights Council, by having PBC Member States acting as informal liaisons with these bodies.
- Managing relations with the World Bank, regional banks and other financial and funding actors, including the OECD and the BRICS' New Development Bank and various funds, through PBC (Vice-)Chair(s) taking responsibility for financing. Several Member States could support the (Vice-)Chair as informal liaisons with specific institutions.
- Managing relations with regional organisations, including the AU, EU, ASEAN and others, by having PBC Member States acting as informal liaisons with these bodies.
- Managing relations with the private sector, including private foundations, funds and investors by assigning this role to one of the Vice-Chairs or the Chair who may then, through conveners and penholders organise meetings with or briefings by these actors.
- Attention on the role of technology as both an enabler and risk for peacebuilding by having a (Vice-)Chair taking responsibility for the topic and working with conveners and penholders to arrange briefings. This should include elements such as managing misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech.
- Attention on thematic areas such as Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) via (Vice-)Chairs taking responsibility for thematic areas, and by organising specific meetings, with the help of conveners, or by making sure that when country specific meetings are held, that these themes are also taken into consideration.
- Managing relations with Peacebuilding Civil Society organisations, across the local to global spectrum, with one of the Vice-Chairs or the Chair taking responsibility and with others ensuring that civil society is included in regular briefings and that the expertise of international peacebuilding organisations, from across the globe, are made available to the PBC.
- Managing relations with the academia, think tanks and research institutions that undertake research and generate knowledge on peacebuilding, by tasking one of the Vice-Chairs or the Chair as a liaison to academia.

2.2 Enhance the quality of information and analysis, as well as stimulating synergies between the UN system and the global peacebuilding community

One of the consistent challenges that the Peacebuilding Commission has faced throughout the first 20 years of its existence is that it failed to generate the kind of information and analysis that would add value to the work of the UN Security Council and other parts of the UN system or the global

peacebuilding and development community.

In our assessment, this is because the Peacebuilding Commission currently engage with countries and regions in an ad hoc manner, and too superficially. The Peacebuilding Commission needs to engage more systematically and holistically with countries and regions, as well as thematic areas on its agenda. We think this is possible if the Peacebuilding Commission expands the way it generates and shares information and analysis. In order to generate higher quality information and analysis, we recommend that the Peacebuilding Commission:

Improve quality of information and analysis

Regularly convene briefings on specific countries, regions and thematic areas. The overall purpose of these meetings should be – in keeping with the strategic focus of the Peacebuilding Commission – to identify trends and developments that relate to the underlying drivers and causes of the conflict. This would include taking stock of the work that is being done by the UN system and the larger peacebuilding and development ecosystem to address the drivers and causes of the conflict in a specific context. Meetings should become more strategic in its focus, coverage and choice of expert briefers. The aim should be to generate high quality information covering all dimensions across the political, security, development, social and environmental spectrum, relevant to understand and analyse the drivers and causes of a given conflict, including especially the interlinkages that peacebuilding actors need to influence in order to sustain peace.

The meetings should shed light on the drivers and causes of the conflict, including trends and developments that shed light on how they are evolving. Commission meetings should also help the UN system and the international peacebuilding and development community to assess progress. This should include inviting UN agencies and others that have undertaken relevant evaluations, to report their findings to the Peacebuilding Commission. The aim of such meetings would be to take stock of progress achieved, or not, and to give strategic direction to the UN system and other actors concerning what needs to be done to help keep all local, national and international stakeholders committed and accountable to the shared goals identified in the relevant strategic frameworks. Information on progress can be generated by inviting local and national representatives and experts from the UN system and beyond to brief the Peacebuilding Commission. These should include national and sub-national government actors, local and national CSOs, in-country UN system actors, as well as other relevant international actors, such as IFIs and other financial and resource/funding partners.

In addition to generating information and analysis, such Peacebuilding Commission meetings would also stimulate coherence and synergies in the UN system as well as in the global peacebuilding and development ecosystems. This is because the different parts of the system, from local to global and across the political, security, economic, social, environmental spectrum in this way will be enabled to share and learn from each other as part of a systematic process.

In order to avoid the PBC being over-burdened with too many meetings, the PBC should introduce more diversity in the types of meetings that it can arrange. In addition to meetings at the level of Permanent Representatives and experts, the Vice-Chairs should also be enabled to arrange specialised meetings on specific topics with voluntary attendance. Such meetings can serve as preparations for regular PBC meetings.

Capture and share information and analysis

One of the reasons why the Peacebuilding Commission suffers from a perception of lack of impact and added value is because it does not generate enough products. We recommend that the Commission improve the way it produces meeting summaries and collect and edit these in the form

of annual reports on a given country, region or thematic area. These would then serve as a source of synthesized information, analysis and evaluation on system-wide peacebuilding progress that does not exist elsewhere in the UN system. Vice-Chairs can ask for volunteers among the membership of the Commission to take responsibility as penholders for overseeing the production of meeting summaries and annual reports. The summaries can be prepared by the PBC secretariat and with the support of experts elsewhere in the UN system. UN staff working in the geographical desks on specific countries and advisors on peace and security can help to ensure quality and add further analysis, and the penholders can oversee the process before summaries are presented for approval via the Vice-Chairs.

We also recommend that the Vice-Chair that is responsible for following a particular country, region or thematic area, generates strategic direction for the UN system and other peacebuilding and development actors. This can be in the form of recommended actions captured in chair summaries or in other formats, aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the overall peacebuilding effort in a given context.

The information and analysis generated by such meetings, and captured and shared through reports and recommendations, can form the basis for Peacebuilding Commission advice to the UN Security Council and other UN bodies.

3. Enhance learning and adaptation

Another important element in the overall initiative to improve the relevance and impact of the Peacebuilding Commission is to make learning and adaptation a central aim and feature of the work of the Architecture. In order to be relevant and impactful, the Peacebuilding Architecture needs to be evidence-based, as well as be guided by the latest research and knowledge available about specific contexts, and peacebuilding practices.

A focus on research, knowledge and learning will help the UN system and international peacebuilding and development ecosystem to continuously evolve and adapt, as new knowledge about the conflicts and transitions they are engaging with becomes available.

The Peacebuilding Commission can become a catalyst for system-wide learning by regularly convening briefings that aim to take stock of the data and knowledge that is available in the UN system, and in the wider peacebuilding and development ecosystem, including local and indigenous knowledge, and in academia. The Peacebuilding Commission should capture and publish the key information and insight shared at these briefings through meeting summaries, and where relevant, annual reports. This work can be closely coordinated with, compliment and benefit from the work of PBSO's Impact Hub.

Vice-Chairs

The Peacebuilding Commission can achieve this focus on knowledge generation, learning and adaptation by strengthening its efforts to develop and share good practices in peacebuilding by assigning knowledge, learning and adaptation to one of the new Vice-Chair functions. The purpose would be for the Vice-Chair to lead efforts to systematically take stock of lessons identified, best practices, new research findings and other forms of relevant knowledge that exist or have been recently generated. The Vice-Chair can on a voluntary basis ask other PBC members to act as liaisons with academia and other knowledge holders, such as indigenous peoples.

The learning and adaptation work should be closely coordinated with the broader effort to enhance the quality of the information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Commission. For example, where the Commission may convene a meeting on a specific country, with a view to take stock of

the peacebuilding progress achieved, that effort can be complimented by a related briefing on the available research evidence related to relevant drivers, causes, trends, dynamics and progress achieved.

Annual conference

In addition to ongoing country, regional and thematic meetings, we recommend that the Peacebuilding Commission convene an annual peacebuilding research and knowledge conference with the global peacebuilding research community and other knowledge holders. The aim should be to take stock of the available research on peacebuilding. Each annual conference can have a specific theme and can be organised around several thematic areas.

There are many ways in which this objective can be achieved with minimum additional costs or administration. For example, the Academic Council of the United Nations System (ACUNS) or the International Studies Association (ISA) or a number of peace studies associations organise their annual meetings in cities like New York. These organisations would welcome the opportunity to engage with a UN body like the PBC. Through the PBSO and/or a Member State acting as a liaison on behalf of a Vice-Chair, the PBC can coordinate with such organisations to have an annual meeting with peacebuilding researchers on a specific theme. In this way the UN would not have to incur any additional costs.

The proceedings of the annual conference can be published by the Peacebuilding Commission and the relevant research association, as this is something that these associations would do anyway. There would be no additional cost and little additional administrative burden placed on the PBC or PBSO. Another option could be to add a research engagement to the annual PBC retreat, where one session is dedicated each year to an engagement with academia, and with a focus on a synthesis of the knowledge gained by the peacebuilding research community on a specific topic.

Advisory panel and network

To more systematically advise the Peacebuilding Architecture, including on arranging an annual peacebuilding research and knowledge conference, the PBSO, with direction from the Peacebuilding Commission, can establish a global research advisory panel. The panel can meet virtually. If feasible, the panel can also convene once a year as part of the Peacebuilding Commission's annual peacebuilding research and knowledge conference.

The PBF has an advisory panel made up of a combination of experts from Member States, CSOs and academia, but their role is limited to advising the Secretary-General on matters related to the PBF. The global research advisory panel would serve the PBC, via the Chair and Vice-Chair responsible for lessons learned, best practices and peacebuilding knowledge. The advisory panel will support the work of the PBC with advice on relevant research knowledge as well as liaison with the research community. It can be constituted by, for example one researcher from each geographical region, selected by a committee constituted for this purpose by the relevant Vice-Chair on a rotational and annual basis.

To ensure that the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Architecture has a network of experts available that it can call on for information and analysis as needed, the PBSO can establish a peacebuilding research and knowledge network and database as part of its Impact Hub.

4. Improving synergy between PBC, PBF & PBSO

Another way in which the Peacebuilding Architecture can enhance its relevance and impact is to better leverage the synergies and complementarities of the different parts of the Peacebuilding

Architecture. Without changing the structure and relationship between the PBC, PBSO and PBF, the synergy and complementarity of the Peacebuilding Architecture can be improved by:

- Enhancing coordination within DPPA to leverage knowledge sharing among the geographic operational desks that manage the UN's Special Political Missions, Peacekeeping Operations, regional offices and other entities, as well as the PBSO. This can extend to liaising with as well as gathering and integrating inputs from the DPPA-UNDP Peace and Development Advisors deployed to support Resident Coordinators. Such an engagement with other parts of DPPA will improve the quality of the information, analysis and expertise that is available to the Peacebuilding Commission on specific countries and regions and that is captured in the proposed annual reports.
- PBSO can also enhance peacebuilding coordination within the UN Secretariat among DPPA, DPO, OROLSI, UNCCT, UN Women, UN Youth Office, etc. by expanding the scope of the entities in the peacebuilding contact group, to leverage knowledge sharing that can enhance the information and analysis that is available for the Peacebuilding Commission on specific countries, regions and thematic areas.
- Beyond the annual session with the PBF, briefings by relevant PBF staff can further enhance the quality of the information and analysis available to the Peacebuilding Commission on specific country, regional and thematic areas. PBF staff also have in-country knowledge and networks that can help the Peacebuilding Commission to invite relevant local and national briefers from the countries on its agenda.

In these ways the PBSO can function in a less compartmentalised way, so as to leverage support from the PBSO, UN Secretariat and whole-of-UN system for the overall functioning of the Peacebuilding Commission.

5. Leveraging Thematic Focus Areas to Enhance the Peacebuilding Architecture's Impact

In this section we discuss how the Peacebuilding Architecture can enhance its impact in three thematic contexts, namely (1) Women, Peace and Security (WPS); (2) Youth Peace and Security (YPS) and (3) the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Commission, in particular, can serve as a forum where UN Member States, the UN system and the wider peacebuilding and development community can engage in an ongoing reflection on how these thematic focus areas can enhance a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding.

Engaging with some of these thematic areas can also be used to enhance effectiveness and leverage and mobilise political and financial attention and support for peacebuilding efforts in specific countries and regions. The sections also shed light on the numerous synergies between different thematic areas in the Peacebuilding Architecture. Advice, deliberations and programming that address WPS, YPS and Indigenous peoples have for instance served as a strategic and programmatic entry point for improving how integrating and understanding of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation can enhance the effectiveness of peacebuilding.

5.1 Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was adopted by the UNSC in 2000. The resolution, and subsequent resolutions together referred to as the WPS agenda, requests UN Member States and the international community to include women in all aspects of peace and security (including conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding), and on all levels. When the PBA was established in 2005, it started off with a formal acknowledgement of the WPS agenda and its importance to peacekeeping. In the case of the Peacebuilding Commission, according to

its founding resolutions, it should integrate a gender perspective in all of its work and consult with women's organizations. However, in the years that followed, operationalization and implementation of the agenda in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission was inconsistent and often struggled to put commitments into action.

Despite these challenges, WPS as an issue area can be considered as well established in the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission. Since 2016, the Commission has made efforts to better deliver on its mandate and integrate gender issues into its work. This includes the adoption of a gender strategy in 2016, with guiding principles for promoting women's participation in peacebuilding, and strategic actions for integrating gender in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. This was followed up by a review of the Gender Strategy in 2020, and the adoption of an action plan in 2021, to monitor progress on implementing the gender strategy. The 2021 action plan contained specific indicators and action areas to this end. The Peacebuilding Commission also holds annual meetings on WPS. Additionally, the PBF's Gender and Youth Promotion initiative seeks to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda through funding initiatives focused on gender equality and women's empowerment.

According to its Gender Strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission shall include a gender analysis and gender specific priority areas in all of its relevant documents and their updates and all different country-specific, regional and thematic engagements of the Peacebuilding Commission, if so accepted by the host-countries. The 2020 review found that while there was noticeable progress on overall support to the PBC Gender Strategy, this was most visible in broad statements of support, rather than in concrete gender analysis. The review also found that consultations with women's organizations featured regularly in Peacebuilding Commission outcome documents. However, this information was not systematically reported on or incorporated into future Peacebuilding Commission meetings. The review also noted that the Peacebuilding Commission tended to refer to women as a homogenous group. It further recommended the implementation of improved intersectional gender analysis, and that the consultations with women leaders be strengthened and more diverse. The development of an action plan to support regular monitoring and review of the gender strategy was also one of the recommendations from the 2020 review.

In response to the new action plan, the Peacebuilding Commission published a written update on its implementation for the period October 2020 to October 2021. The written update identified progress in the substantive quality of gender references in the Peacebuilding Commission outcome documents, in the number of women peacebuilders who had been invited to brief the PBC, and how the PBC reflects the contextual analysis and recommendations provided by these women briefers. However, several challenges remained, including mainstreaming gender perspectives and the inclusion of gender-specific language into all country, regional and thematic outcome documents, as well as the lack of gender analysis and/or sex disaggregated data in more than half of PBC outcome documents (as specifically requested in the action plan). Additionally, while the number of women peacebuilders increased in the reporting period, it remained unclear how and whether the analysis and recommendations provided through this mechanism were implemented, used or incorporated into the preparatory documents of future meetings on the same country, region or thematic.

The Peacebuilding Commission Gender strategy and action plan are important achievements, and continued and strengthened efforts towards their implementation will support the WPS impact of the PBC. In terms of the ambitions outlined in the gender strategy and the action plan, there is still room for improvement when it comes to areas such as strengthened gender analysis, the ability to follow-up on the recommendations made by women peacebuilders, and how the PBC engages with and provides gender-responsive advice to relevant UN bodies. To strengthen and diversify its gender analysis, the PBC may rely on increased engagement with CSOs and academia. It was mentioned in the written update from 2021 that limited capacity in PBSO and UN Women was a challenge in this area. Research has also shown that the engagement of previous chairs affected how WPS was put on

the agenda and integrated into the discussion on the PBC. Assigning responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Gender Strategy and Action Plan to one of the Vice-Chairs could therefore be one way of ensuring more continuity. Finally, the written update from 2021 has not been followed by similar updates in the years since then, and more systematic monitoring and reporting would enable the commission to better track progress as well as challenges, and initiate action where needed.

The number of women peacebuilders who are invited to brief the Commission has continued to increase, but, as mentioned, the follow-up on the recommendations made by women peacebuilders is not happening in a systematic way. The PBA should therefore also look into creating mechanisms for tracking how the recommendations made by women peacebuilders are followed up but also how they are used in the PBC's own work, and how they are shared with the wider UN system. Ideally, the recommendations and input from women peacebuilders and others who brief the PBC should end up in PBC outputs such as the (written) advice the PBC provides to the UN Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Human Rights Council, meeting summaries and annual reports on a given country, region or thematic area. A key recommendation going forward is therefore to increase efforts to 1) make sure that the knowledge and advice from women peacebuilders is integrated into Commission outputs and actions, and 2) monitor where this advice ends up. This could be done by strengthening the monitoring capacity of the PBSO, or by supporting civil society and/or academia to take on a more active monitoring role in this regard.

5.2 Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

Since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in 2015, the Peacebuilding Commission has actively invited young peacebuilders to participate in country-specific meetings, thematic discussions and field visits, providing a platform for youth to share their peace and conflict perspectives. It has furthermore provided policy and operational recommendations on YPS to various UN bodies, including the UNSC. In 2021, in line with Resolution 2535(2020) and at the proposal of PBC Member States, the PBC developed a Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding to guide its efforts and better mainstream youth considerations into its work. Key actions included consulting with youth during country-specific, regional and thematic meetings and field missions, supporting countries under PBC consideration to promote YPS in national strategies and plans, and exploring opportunities for greater cooperation with the General Assembly, ECOSOC, Human Rights Council, IFIs and regional organisations like the African Union to enhance the role of youth in peacebuilding.

The approval of the Strategic Action Plan led to significant improvements in the Peacebuilding Commission's youth and peacebuilding efforts. A 2022 assessment by the DPPA, noted a significant increase in young peacebuilder briefers at PBC meetings, more frequent references to youth and peacebuilding in outcome documents, and a greater focus on youth issues in country-specific meetings, including those on Burundi and Sierra Leone in 2021. In a similar fashion, a 2023 assessment by the DPPA found that most of the PBC's advice and briefings to the UNSC, GA and ECOSOC in 2022, included references and recommendations on youth in peacebuilding. Other efforts include PBC's annual meeting on YPS. In the 2022 ambassadorial-level meeting, young briefers from Kenya, Liberia, Indonesia and El Salvador explored ways to advance the YPS agenda. Similarly, the 2023 meeting brought together representatives from the African Union, League of Arab States and youth-led civil society in South-East Asia, to discuss how to strengthen linkages between regional, national and local YPS efforts.

Notwithstanding the Peacebuilding Commission's progress in highlighting and advocating for youth-related issues and participation in peacebuilding in recent years, implementation challenges and gaps remain. As found by the two DPPA assessments, and a YPS Capacity Building Workshop for the PBC, there is a need for more context-specific referencing to YPS, greater engagement and more diverse representation of youth briefers to ensure meaningful engagement, as well as more

systematic follow-ups with consulted youths and concrete support to youth organisations to measure impact and progress. Sharing information and best practices on youth and peacebuilding also needs to be improved to generate information and analyses that are more evidence-based. This could improve the relevance and the impact of the Peacebuilding Architecture on the positive role of youth in peacebuilding and better support capacity building of YPS initiatives on national and local levels. On an institutional level, greater cooperation within the UN system is necessary to strengthen PBC's advisory role and to advance collaboration of the YPS agenda. Building better synergies with IFIs and regional organisations is also important to overcome implementation and funding gaps.

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is the largest funding window for youth-responsive programming. In 2016, the PBF launched the Youth Promotion Initiative, which allowed the PBF to provide funding directly to civil society organisations, either as primary recipients or as implementing partners. It specifically funds youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding projects that have a strong YPS component. In 2022 and 2023, the PBF invested \$53.6 million in 34 projects through this initiative. The overall multilateral financing to the YPS agenda is however facing challenges and gaps. To make funding more accessible to youth and youth-led organisations and to better integrate young people into financial strategies for prevention and peacebuilding, coordination and cooperation between young peacebuilders and donors, Member States, IFIs, CSOs and the Peacebuilding Architecture on financing priorities need to be strengthened. One way to improve this could be for the PBC to convene regular briefings on the financing of youth-led initiatives with active participation (virtually or in person depending on resources) from youth-led organisations, PBF and other relevant funding partners to help setting priorities that can be included in the PBC's recommendations. Seeing that the PBF is actively involved in financing youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, better synergies between PBF, PBC and PBSO could further enhance the quality of information and analysis in the PBC on this matter, which in turn, may enhance the sustainability of youth-led civil society efforts. Such briefings could further contribute to closing parts of the data gap on YPS interventions, as it could help produce analyses on the quality of financing and on how funding benefits programmes by and for youth.

5.3 The Nexus between Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Peacebuilding

Although the Peacebuilding Commission does not have an explicit mandate to focus on linkages between climate change and peacebuilding, its integrated mandate to work across peace, security and development may provide comparative advantages for engagement with and deliberations on the multidimensional challenges of the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and peacebuilding. The countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission can choose to discuss climate change, environmental degradation and related natural resource issues, and this is likely to increasingly be the case as most of the countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda tend to be highly exposed to and affected by climate change and environmental issues.

Building on similar notions of national ownership, the United Nation's Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace recommended that the Peacebuilding Commission can further serve as a space for Member States to address linkages between development, climate change and peace. This includes enhancing the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a convener of thematic discussions on cross-thematic issues. The Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB) furthermore recommended that the Peacebuilding Commission be provided with an expanded mandate that includes the growing impacts of climate change and environmental changes on sustaining peace.

The traditional forum where climate-related peace and security risk are discussed in the Peacebuilding Commission context has been country-specific configurations. From 2021 to October 2024, climate related issues have featured in advice and meetings that addressed South Sudan, Honduras, Mozambique, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Since the 2015, the

Peacebuilding Commission has also expanded its activities from country- to regional configurations. Already from 2017, the PBC initiated a series of meetings on and received an explicit mandate on addressing the implications of climate change for peacebuilding in the Sahel. Advice provided to the UNSC on regions such as the Sahel, Lake Chad, West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea have in recent years all addressed the impacts of climate change. Climate change has also been discussed in formal meetings on several regional contexts, including the Pacific Islands and Central Asia. Over the last years, climate change has furthermore featured in advice on thematic areas such as sea-level rise, WPS, Indigenous peoples, peace transitions, cooperation with regional organizations, financing of peacebuilding and the economic consequences of conflict.

The PBF has also supported a number of peacebuilding projects that emphasize the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and peacebuilding. A thematic review headed by the United Nations University was published in 2023. This included reviewing 43 projects distributed across 33 countries that contained relevant thematic elements, including projects that test integrated responses in YPS, WPS and emphasize cross-border and transnational programming approaches. The review concluded that such projects could get to the heart of what many communities consider their most pressing human security concern as well as factors that drive persistent conflict and insecurity, while also taking perspectives on likely future pressures into account.

It also concluded that engaging with the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and peacebuilding can bring important synergies and benefits for other peacebuilding priorities. More than half of the projects contained a focus on gender and youth. The review furthermore recommends continued emphasis on innovative cross-border projects. The New Agenda for Peace also recommended the establishment of a new funding window within the Peacebuilding Fund for more risk-tolerant climate finance investments.

Another key advice is to engage particularly with partners and Member States that are actively addressing the peacebuilding outcomes of climate change. This should include groups of Member States such as the Pacific Small Island Developing States and organizations like the African Union, as well as regional mechanisms and sub-regional-agencies. It should also include greater engagement with practitioners and communities of knowledge in research and civil society, with particular care to involve knowledge holders that are situated in regions affected by climate change, insecurity and conflict. Such partnerships could facilitate both greater acceptance and stronger arguments for the relevance of climate change and environmental issues for peacebuilding. It could also leverage the unique potential of the Peacebuilding Commission to facilitate greater learning across countries, regions and continents.

Conclusion

The main challenge that has consistently been identified over the years, including in previous reviews of the Peacebuilding Architecture, is the perceived lack of impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Commission. This input paper therefore focuses on providing a set of practical recommendations for how the impact of the Peacebuilding Commission can be improved, and how the synergies of the Peacebuilding Architecture can be enhanced.

Four areas were highlighted, namely: (1) maintaining strategic focus on addressing the underlying drivers and causes of conflict, (2) enhancing the quality of information and analysis generated by the Peacebuilding Architecture, (3) strengthening synergy and coherence across the UN system and within the global peacebuilding and development ecosystem, and (4) stimulating UN system learning and adaptation.

When undertaken together, a renewed commitment to the strategic focus of the Commission, as well as the changes recommended in this input paper to the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission and the other parts of the Architecture, should help to enhance the quality of the information and analysis generated by the Commission. This should in turn improve the impact and relevance of the Peacebuilding Architecture.

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