

GENERAL SEGMENT

Background Note

African countries emerging from conflict (item 7 (f))

Background

Africa's development prospects and challenges have been on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council for some time. Beginning in the early 1990s with the launch of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the Council was tasked to review the region's progress at its high-level segment in 1995 and its Coordination Segment 1999. The Council again considered Africa at its high-level Segment in 2001 at which time the link between peace and development was highlighted as key to sustainable development. The 2001 Ministerial Declaration established the parameters for the establishment of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict at the request of the General Assembly (A/RES/55/217). The request was in response to the recommendations made by the General Assembly Open Ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the report of the Secretary General on Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (55/45).

The mandate of the two ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau (created in October 2002) and on Burundi (created in July 2003) was essentially to assess humanitarian and economic needs, prepare long-term programmes of support that aim at the integration of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development and provide advice on how to ensure that development assistance is timely, adequate and coordinated. These Groups played a pioneering role in advancing the concept of an integrated approach to peace and development and was a catalyst for addressing the gap in the UN's architecture for dealing with post-conflict countries. The mandates of the two advisory groups were terminated in 2008 and 2006 respectively to allow for their peacebuilding challenges to be addressed by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). On terminating the mandate of Guinea Bissau in 2008, the Council expressed the desire to be informed about the economic and social aspects of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau under the item "African countries emerging from conflict".¹

The Peacebuilding Commission

The founding resolution for the Peacebuilding Commission, 60/180, defined the parameters for the relationship between ECOSOC and the PBC, including the election by the Council of seven members to the PBC Organizational Committee and the prerogative of obtaining its advice on adding countries to the Council's agenda. ECOSOC Reform resolution, 61/16 (paras. 20-23) also framed the Council's interaction with the PBC. These resolutions did not define the modalities of interaction between the bodies; however, over the years, the individual Presidents of ECOSOC and the Chairs of the PBC have forged a working

¹ ECOSOC Resolution, E/2008/30

relationship which has evolved from informal meetings between them to joint Bureaux meetings and joint informal events.

The Council has also taken a proactive stance in defining its relationship with the PBC by inviting the PBC in 2009² to strengthen its cooperation with ECOSOC and requesting the Chair of the PBC “to continue to inform it on best practices, particularly on lessons learned from its experiences that are relevant for addressing the economic and social challenges of peacebuilding in other African countries emerging from conflict”. The resolution also requested the PBC to strengthen its cooperation with ECOSOC, including through “an enhanced dialogue between the Council and the Chairpersons of the Commission’s country-specific configurations”.

In 2010, the General Assembly conducted a review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which emphasized the importance of the advisory role of the PBC and also the need to find innovative ways to give substance to the relationship with the General Assembly and the ECOSOC³. The review of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on ECOSOC Reform may also provide some guidance on the relationship between the two bodies.

Joint Informal Event of the ECOSOC and PBC on “Promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Sudan and South Sudan”

On 13 June 2011, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal event “Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Sudan and South Sudan” to highlight the importance of development to peace; the need for effective and coordinated international support to Sudan and South Sudan and the importance of regional cooperation.

A number of key messages emerged, including the following:

- Peace and stability is vital to launch development which in turn is critical to sustaining peace. This should be complemented by a transparent and inclusive approach to create legitimacy of the new state;
- The development and state-building needs of South Sudan are enormous and hence the volume of assistance should be commensurate with the scale of the challenges;
- National ownership should be encouraged and developed so that that the Government of South Sudan can coordinate development assistance in alignment with its own priorities. There should be a rethinking of traditional approaches to aid and donor coordination, building upon recent best practices and innovations.
- An integrated approach by intergovernmental bodies, the UN system and other donors and actors will create the conditions for a more effective response and will deliver peace dividends and faster developmental results;
- South Sudan could be considered as a beneficiary of the Peacebuilding Fund;

² ECOSOC Resolution, E/2009/32

³ Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (A/64/868) and General Assembly resolution 65/7

- South Sudan should be a “test case” for implementing the recommendations of the Civilian Capacity Report.
- Strong regional cooperation is vital to peace and sustainable development in the region.

Members may wish to consider the following in preparing their interventions during the discussion under this item:

- Views on the value of the interaction between ECOSOC and the PBC and identification of specific ways that the relationship can be enhanced;
- Comments on best practices from the PBC country configurations and Working Group on Lessons Learned that are valuable for the Council’s work, including its possible contribution to the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review;
- Ways in which the Council can support the new state of South Sudan.
- Ways in which the Council can contribute to the ongoing work in the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development, in particular as it regards the economic and social aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding and the role of the UN system.