

PBC Joint meeting with ECOSOC:

Fostering global solidarity in response to coherent and conflict sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts

Thursday, 19 November 2020, 10:00am-1:00pm

Chair's Note

Opening remarks

- Dear colleagues, I'm pleased to co-chair this joint meeting on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.
- The PBC has been extraordinarily active in responding to COVID-19, convening over a dozen virtual ambassadorial-level meetings since the onset of the pandemic. Many of these have focused explicitly on the impact of COVID-19 on the abilities of governments and their partners to deliver on national peacebuilding priorities.
- I'd like to share some observations based on these discussions:
- In most countries and regions where the PBC has engaged, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic and political inequalities; destroyed lives, livelihoods and social cohesion; strained trust in and the capacity of governance institutions, and increased instability and displacement.
- Several countries engaged with the PBC have faced challenges in funding and organizing planned elections that are critical to the implementation of peace processes.
- Violence against women has increased at such an alarming rate that it has being called the 'shadow pandemic' – yet often overlooked in recovery plans.
- COVID-19 has laid bare the fact that the UN's peacebuilding success stories are often more fragile than we like to admit. Even after decades of international peacebuilding support, many countries are only one or two shocks away from falling into deep crisis.
- Several countries where the PBC is engaged are at risk of seeing double digit contractions in economic growth, and small and medium enterprises, which employ 90% of the workforce in Africa, have suffered severe consequences.

- This requires us to fundamentally rethink our approaches, and to put livelihoods, economic security for citizens, and inclusive economic development at the heart of peacebuilding.
- It is important that government responses to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and international assistance do not replicate or exacerbate existing inequalities or social division, pay urgent attention to livelihoods and inclusive economic development, and prevent the reversal of peacebuilding gains.
- This crisis cuts across the UN's traditional siloes and requires a truly integrated, multi-sectoral, global response.
- The success of our interventions in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and building back better will be determined by the extent to which they address the root causes of conflict as part of a multidimensional and people-centred humanitarian and development response, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- This has been an important consideration in context of the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture and I hope will be reflected in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review currently underway.
- As a flexible, demand-driven platform, the PBC has directly engaged with a wide range of stakeholders on the ground representing national governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society including women and youth peacebuilders, private sector and international financial institutions.
- The PBC has also offered its platform and advice on cross-cutting issues with potential to impact peace and security, such as climate change, environmental degradation, migration, institution building as well as development and economic issues.
- These efforts are of particular relevance to the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind its role as a principal body for coordination, policy review and policy dialogue for achievement of the SDGS.
- In particular, even before the pandemic, the PBC has been advocating for sufficient funding to support nationally-owned and -led initiatives that address root causes and conflict drivers to sustain peace and development over the long term.
- The impact of COVID has exacerbated fragility risks around the world and created new pressure on already scant peacebuilding resources. Demand is outpacing the supply for funding.
- As I have said earlier, strategy without resources is hallucination. There is an urgent need for commensurate financial support, including through increased support to the SG's Peacebuilding Fund.

- The PBC has also been working to strengthen engagement with the development system, and partnerships with the international financial institutions.
- The crisis ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic, with its enormous human cost, has reinforced the need for global solidarity to address the present health and humanitarian crisis and build durable peace and sustainable development.
- It has also reinforced the need for enhanced collaboration between the ECOSOC and the PBC to support a robust global response and recovery that ensures that countries affected by conflict are not left behind.
- I hope that today's meeting can advance these efforts, and I am looking forward to the discussion.