1. The international human rights framework comprise universal norms agreed to and recognized by States as essential elements and principles for building resilient, peaceful, inclusive and just societies. As such, the promotion and protection of human rights provide the foundation for sustaining peace and sustainable development with full respect for national ownership.

2. Human rights are relevant along the peace and conflict continuum – human rights violations can simultaneously be a cause, trigger and consequence of violence and conflict. Human rights serve as a bridge in periods of transition across political systems and UN presences and operations in countries; they are a benchmark against which to measure progress.

3. Human rights interventions, tools and mechanisms are part of the collective toolbox of the UN system and international community to support Member States, allowing space for dialogue and resolution of social tensions, conflict and violence within communities and in States, identifying those in vulnerable situations or being “left behind”, and providing ways and means in which they can be empowered to overcome their vulnerability. The utilization of this toolbox ensures the effectiveness and sustainability of development and conflict prevention efforts.

4. Human rights information and analysis, as well as the recommendations of human rights bodies and mechanisms, have a specific role to play in UN prevention – identifying root causes and drivers of conflict, discrimination and inequalities, but also the sustainable solutions to prevent the lapse or relapse to conflict. Given the emphasis on “people-centred” approaches to solving problems and addressing grievance, human rights information and analysis have also demonstrated value in providing targeted support to Member States in responding to these challenges.

5. The UN’s policy and operational responses to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace should utilize the full range of tools and resources from across the human rights, peace and security and development pillars in an integrated or joined-up way.
1. BACKGROUND

Grievances often result from a lack of enjoyment or respect for human rights and, when left unaddressed, can deteriorate into violence and conflict with increasingly narrow, costly, uncertain or ineffectual options for their resolution. As violations of human rights are often both a precursor to and consequence of violence and conflict, human rights promotion and protection provide important solutions for addressing grievances peacefully and effectively.

Over several centuries, the international human rights framework developed as part of efforts to resolve conflicts and prevent their re-emergence. The link between human rights, conflict prevention and peacebuilding is clearly affirmed in the UN’s founding documents: article 55 of the Charter establishes the promotion and protection of human rights as a core purpose of the UN - essential for “the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights elaborates these rights and sets out a “common standard of achievement” for all peoples and nations in order to lessen the risk of violent conflict and avoid “recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression.”

The centrality of human rights to peace is as relevant today in view of the contemporary challenges and risks arising inter alia from climate change, asymmetric conflicts and States’ responses to migration movements or civil society protests worldwide. It demonstrates the impact on peace and stability of social and economic inequalities, and curtailment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights and freedoms.

The Secretary-General’s prevention agenda restates the preventive value of human rights in enhancing the UN’s capacity to “help countries to avert the outbreak of crises that take a high toll on humanity, undermining institutions and capacities to achieve peace and development.” The Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) initiative reinforces this vision. Launched in 2013 after the 2012 Internal Review Panel on UN action in Sri Lanka had concluded that there had been a “systemic failure” in meeting UN responsibilities, the Initiative aims to improve coherence across the peace and security, development, and human rights pillars to prevent and respond to serious human rights violations and complex crises by effecting cultural, political and operational changes in the field and at UN Headquarters.

In 2019, the Brief and Independent Inquiry into the involvement of the UN in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018 concluded another “systemic failure” by the UN in preventing a deteriorating situation, and underlined the need for human rights protection responsibilities to be further institutionalized across the system. The Inquiry’s conclusions are particularly timely and relevant in the context of the reforms to the development and peace and security architecture – demonstrating, for example, the importance of direct access by senior leadership to human rights information, advice and expertise during crises, and the need for greater coordination and coherence in UN actions.

In defining the concept of sustaining peace (S/RES/2282 and A/RES/70/262 (2016)), the Security Council and General Assembly placed equal emphasis on prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding in recognition of a peace and conflict continuum; the resolutions also re-oriented the focus of actions from “negative” to positive “peace”. Recalling the interdependence of the three pillars, the importance of a comprehensive approach, which included the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, was emphasized. Additionally, paragraph 11 of both resolutions encourages “Member States participating in the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council to consider the human rights dimensions of peacebuilding, as relevant.”

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2 https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf, Preamble
3 A sustaining peace perspective shifts focus from negative (absence of physical violence) to positive peace, which implies just social and economic structures and political participation as well as the development of skills, attitudes and institutions to constructively and creatively handle societal tensions and conflict.
2. HUMAN RIGHTS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND SUSTAINING PEACE

Human rights exist along the peace and conflict continuum – violations of which can simultaneously be a cause, trigger and consequence of violence and conflict. Integrating a human rights perspective in analyses of risk of conflict is therefore key to the identification of root causes and drivers for early warning, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The promotion and protection of human rights are also the basis for creating or rebuilding resilient, inclusive, just and peaceful societies - underpinning the establishment of strong, professional and accountable state institutions, and the creation of credible and rights-compliant avenues for accountability and reconciliation. Human rights promotion and protection also build confidence in institutions and bridge societal divides by strengthening a sense of common values and shared humanity, and promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts grounded in respect for the rights and dignity of others.

Human rights and peacebuilding approaches share similar goals, principles and values

The desire for peace and social justice, addressing inequalities and grievances, underlies both peacebuilding and human rights approaches and are grounded in the principles of national ownership, inclusivity/non-discrimination, and participation/empowerment.

Peacebuilding, sustaining peace and the promotion and protection of human rights are both goals and processes towards building resilient, inclusive and peaceful societies – the primary responsibility for which rests with States. The focus on national ownership of peacebuilding processes is an acknowledgement that peace can only be sustainable if it results from the efforts of government and all segments of society - reflecting their priorities. Human rights are similarly grounded on this principle, through the decision of sovereign States to ratify international human rights treaties and make global human rights commitments, the implementation of which opens the space for dialogue and negotiation between those bearing duties and holding rights in a country. As the Secretary-General stated: “We must overcome the false dichotomy between human rights and national sovereignty. Human rights and national sovereignty go hand in hand. The promotion of human rights strengthens States and societies, thereby reinforcing sovereignty. And the best defenders of human rights are well-functioning sovereign States.”

Inclusivity and inclusive national ownership are also key in peacebuilding processes and outcomes to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account. A human rights approach similarly focuses on inclusive and meaningful participation, including for example in negotiation and consultation processes or the setting-up of mechanisms relating to peace at the national and sub-national levels. This requires that different groups and communities, such as women, youth-led organizations, ethnic and minority groups, indigenous communities, traditional leaders, faith-based actors, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, sexual and gender-based minorities and other stakeholders, are represented and empowered to participate actively in processes and decision-making without discrimination. A human rights approach also supports the promotion, protection and expansion of an open, free, safe and enabling civic space, which requires guarantees and safeguards in the enjoyment and exercise of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Human rights education complements peace education in promoting common values and a sense of shared humanity, helping to address hostility and mistrust among communities or groups, and between the state and individuals or groups – offering a space for constructive dialogue and cooperation, based on a clear framework that applies to all equally. Additionally, human rights education empowers individuals and communities to analyze the challenges they face and identify solutions consistent with human rights values, allowing them to voice their

grievances, participate in public affairs and advocate for responses – while upholding their rights and those of others. This results in greater engagement by civil society and community-based organizations in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In Kenya, the Senior Human Rights Adviser (SHRA) and OHCHR partnered with social justice centres - grassroots movements of young human rights defenders from informal urban settlements – and supported their advocacy on such issues as police violence and extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, and unequal access to water and sanitation, education and other basic services. As a result of this partnership, the Social Justice Centres Working Group, a coordination mechanism, made a submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Kenya in 2019 in its first engagement with international human rights mechanisms.

**Human rights as a guarantee of the sustainability of peace and development efforts**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses a range of structural issues that underlie or contribute to violent conflict and fragility, and poverty and inequality, and includes one of 17 goals on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16). A peace and conflict lens is mainstreamed throughout the goals and targets which, taken together, can drive positive change at national and international levels. Similarly, human rights and the 2030 Agenda are also mutually reinforcing, as many of the goals and targets are anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. The primary objective of the 2030 Agenda is to “leave no one behind.” This pledge, which is rooted in the human rights principle of equality and non-discrimination, also underpins conflict prevention and peacebuilding as affirmed by the Secretary-General when stating that inclusive and sustainable development is the best defence against the risks of violent conflict.

A human rights approach thus ensures the sustainability and inclusiveness of development processes by identifying those in vulnerable situations or being “left behind”, and providing ways and means in which they can be empowered to overcome their vulnerability. For further information, please refer to OHCHR’s thematic paper on economic, social and cultural rights and the sustainable development goals in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

**Human rights analysis and responses to the drivers of violence and conflict as the basis for technical cooperation**

The analytical approach to human rights has a specific role to play in UN prevention, including the development of cross-agency analysis and effective mitigating actions. It has also demonstrated value in providing targeted support to Member States in responding to challenges. The use of human rights information in early warning risk analysis can help to identify root causes and drivers of conflict, discrimination and inequalities. Addressing human rights holistically – given the indivisibility and interdependence of civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights - provides a basis for more comprehensive, accurate and objective analysis. For further information, please refer to OHCHR’s thematic paper on joined-up rights-based analysis for prevention.

Despite a common misperception of human rights work as predominantly monitoring and reporting, a primary focus is engagement and dialogue with States through technical cooperation, capacity-building, policy guidance and other advice or assistance. Support for engagement and cooperation with the human rights mechanisms or implementation of their recommendations is key in this regard.

In Kenya, OHCHR partnered with UN Women and Physicians for Human Rights on a human rights-based analysis of institutional gaps and challenges to support the formulation of survivor/victim-centred short- and medium-term measures, particularly in the security, legal and health sectors, to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence ahead of the 2022 elections. An integral element of this process was to give a platform for active engagement by survivors/victims of electoral-related sexual violence. The analysis resulted in dialogue between the Government, civil society and survivors/victims’ networks. As follow-up, OHCHR and UN Women are supporting implementation of the recommendations in the lead up to the 2022 elections.

In Kosovo, UNMIK’s human rights component, in partnership with IOM, is implementing a trust-building initiative

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5 A/72/707-S/2018/43, para. 5
aimed at promoting the learning of both official languages to facilitate reconciliation and the socio-economic inclusion of communities, and support general peacebuilding efforts in the region. The first phase (completed in June 2019) resulted in the development of the first online Albanian and Serbian dictionary and an associated Serbian and Albanian online language course. The second phase, which started in September 2019, further developed the dictionary and the online language course.

In Malawi, data on the 2019 election-related violence recorded in the integrated prevention platform facilitated an early warning analysis of the root causes of the violence, as well as the primary causes of related human rights violations. The analysis showed that initially peaceful demonstrations became increasingly frequent and violent as Malawians expressed long-held dissatisfaction with social exclusion and weak implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. Unprepared for these high levels of violence, the Malawi Police Force struggled to maintain public order, which led to injuries on both sides. Based on this analysis, a comprehensive UN prevention strategy was developed and adopted by the UN country team. In addition to a Resident Coordinator-led dialogue with political, civil society and community leaders in 2019, the SHRA partnered with UNDP and the UN Standing Police Capacity to implement a capacity-building and technical assistance programme for the Malawi Police Force to conduct public order management and policing in line with international human rights standards.

In Mauritania, OHCHR and IOM strengthened community dialogue (through village/community committees) between Malian refugees and resident host communities as part of a project to address food insecurity and livelihood opportunities in Hodh Ech Chargui. The peacebuilding project was conceptualized, implemented, monitored and evaluated while applying a human rights-based methodology - with emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. The methodology allowed for the identification of the main conflict factors and the design of a response strategy through participatory community-based and community-owned dialogue and decision-making mechanisms; priority locations for community/village committees were also identified – with evaluation and capacity-building provided, including training on conflict management.

The impartiality of human rights analysis has contributed to OHCHR’s active engagement in supporting peace processes at the invitation of governments and with the support of civil society. In Nicaragua, OHCHR accompanied the Verification and Security Commission, created in 2018 in the context of the National Dialogue. In Venezuela, the 2019 visit of the High Commissioner for Human Rights created the space for constructive dialogue with the Government, the opposition and civil society actors.

In Liberia, OHCHR worked with national actors to advocate for the establishment of an accountability mechanism for economic crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This was done by providing platforms for dialogue and decision-making on implementation of TRC recommendations, which included the National Colloquium, Liberia National Bar Association (LNBA) Annual Conference, National Economic Summit, among others. As a result, Liberians agreed and called on the Government to establish an Economic and War Crimes Court for which the LNBA produced a draft bill currently pending before the Legislature.

The intersection of human rights and peacebuilding:

There are many areas where human rights and peacebuilding intersect, some of which are elaborated below or are addressed in separate OHCHR thematic papers.

**Climate change**: Climate change is a threat multiplier, directly and indirectly impacting an array of rights, including to water, food, health, shelter and life. Climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable - those who are the poorest, most exposed and have the least resources to withstand shocks and stresses, such as extreme weather events. Through its impacts, climate change can further drive inequality, conflict and humanitarian crises. Human rights obligations on climate change require the international community to mitigate emissions, support adaptation that benefits the most vulnerable, and ensure participatory climate action, which prioritizes and involves those most affected in developing strategies for mitigation and adaptation.

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6 See General Comment 36 of the Human Rights Committee on the right to life (2018), CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 62
In resolution 40/11, the Human Rights Council (HRC) affirmed the critical role of environmental activists and human rights defenders in protecting vital ecosystems, addressing climate change, attaining the sustainable development goals and ensuring that no-one is left behind. In implementing this resolution, OHCHR will continue to strengthen partnerships on rights-based climate and environmental action, reinforcing broader UN system efforts, including by UN country teams and human rights mechanisms to respond to the protection needs of environmental human rights defenders.

**Minorities:** In cases where inter-ethnic, religious or other identity-related tensions or discrimination have been a trigger and/or a feature of conflict, it is particularly important for the UN to be sensitive to diversity within and between communities, and to accordingly prioritize popular engagement and dialogue with minority and marginalized groups in conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions. Such interventions can help to counter exclusion and create new opportunities for minorities and others to play a greater role in the public realm.

**Transitional justice:** In the aftermath of massive or serious human rights violations, sustainable peace can only be achieved if societies pursue comprehensive reform paths – addressing root causes and drivers of human rights abuses – that also render justice for past violations. With interrelated pillars of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, transitional justice can navigate complex societal and political transitions, marked by rapid change, competing interests, pain and simmering grievance, and where narratives and memories are at risk of extreme polarization and instrumentalization. Transitional justice processes, when they are context-specific, nationally-owned and focused on the needs of victims, can empower and transform societies – connecting victims and perpetrators, political factions, communities, and across generations. Truth-seeking initiatives, for example, can provide a platform for identifying commonalities in experience, acknowledging multiple narratives about what occurred, and formulating recommendations for redress and reform. Inclusive transitional justice processes that are participatory and seek broad societal ownership can be deeply empowering for victims, particularly marginalized groups – giving them voice and agency to shape their own future as rights-holders. For further information, please refer to OHCHR’s thematic paper on peacebuilding, sustaining peace and transitional justice.

**Women’s rights:** Ensuring the human rights of women and girls is intrinsically linked to and significantly impacts on building and sustaining peace as demonstrated by the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions affirm the importance of women’s participation in decision-making levels at all stages of conflict prevention, resolution and peace processes, and link protection against and accountability for conflict-related sexual violence to the creation and maintenance of a peaceful society.

**Youth:** Social, political and economic inequalities and exclusions, as well as persistent human rights violations that drive current conflicts are directly connected to the lives of young people. The global agenda on youth, peace and security is premised on the inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in efforts at conflict prevention and sustaining peace – as affirmed by the Security Council in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). Young women and men also play a critical role in advancing the sustainable development goals, including Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective institutions. At the same time, and in the global context of shrinking civic space, continuing and sustained threats and human rights violations have been reported against young activists, including young peacebuilders and human rights defenders. Responses to social protests and movements have resulted in limitations on the freedoms of movement, asocial and assembly. Youth are also particularly vulnerable to use and recruitment by armed actors, including non-State armed groups and are at risk of being exploited by terrorist groups. The human rights protection of youth is thus interlinked with the youth, peace and security agenda. Human rights education is vital, including in fostering a culture of peace and non-violent methods to manage conflicts, and for empowering young women and men to mobilize, advocate for, engage and participate in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
3. CROSS-PILLAR INTEGRATION AND COHERENCE

Given the interconnected nature of today’s conflicts and crises, the UN’s policy and operational responses to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace should utilize the full range of tools and resources from across the human rights, peace and security and development pillars. The twin sustaining peace resolutions affirmed the centrality of this three-pillar approach and positively acknowledged the Secretary-General’s prevention agenda and the institutional reforms put in place to address fragmentation in UN action.

3.1 Institutional coherence

In alignment with these developments, OHCHR included prevention among four cross-cutting themes (frontier issues, civic space and global constituency) in its Management Plan for 2018-2021. The “prevention shift” is aimed at encouraging a change in mindsets and operations through more granular analysis and comprehensive responses that address the interlinkages between violations of different rights and the risk of violent conflict and crisis in a country or region. Accordingly, OHCHR is implementing a more integrated approach that encompasses both the prevention of violence, social unrest and conflict, and the promotion of equality and inclusivity, as also framed by the 2030 Agenda, through the realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In furthering PBSO’s hinge role, OHCHR strengthened engagement, collaboration and partnership, including through the co-location of one staff in PBSO and the development of a two-year joint OHCHR-PBSO workplan (2019-2020).

3.2 Intergovernmental coherence

The work, discussions and outcomes of UN intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms across the peace and security, human rights and development pillars are mutually reinforcing and complementary - greatly enriching understanding of and informing responses to issues of global or country-specific significance. Yet interaction and collaboration between intergovernmental bodies, for example between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the HRC and its mechanisms, on common issues or countries under consideration occur infrequently or are ad-hoc at best.

HRC: In 2017, the HRC discussed for the first-time the contribution of human rights to peacebuilding at its annual panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming. In 2018, resolution 38/18 on the HRC’s contribution to the prevention of human rights violations recognizes the crucial role of the HRC and its mechanisms in identifying protection gaps which, if addressed, could help build more resilient societies and sustain development and peace. The resolution mandates a report for the 43rd session (February-March 2020) containing proposals for the operationalisation of the HRC and its mechanisms to advance its prevention mandate, and strengthen coherence and institutional collaboration amongst UN bodies for the effective prevention of human rights violations (A/HRC/43/37).

Proposals include the official sharing of HRC reports with the Security Council and/or the PBC through the Secretary-General; fostering the working relationship between the HRC and the PBC, including through sharing of good practices on the interlinkages between sustaining peace and human rights; and between PBSO and the special procedures; the development by OHCHR and PBSO of a comprehensive framework linking peacebuilding activities to the prevention of human rights violations, which could also guide the incorporation of human rights into peacebuilding priority plans at the country level; the inclusion of the recommendations of HRC mechanisms in conflict analyses and needs assessments for projects considered and supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and in the mechanisms of the prevention platform; and the systematic participation of Resident Coordinators in country-specific HRC discussions – although this is dependent on the specific resolutions governing the format of such discussions.

PBC: Through its cross-pillar mandate, the PBC can enhance coherence of system-wide peacebuilding responses, which also encompass a human rights dimension. Over the years, human rights issues of transitional justice, reconciliation and the rule of law have been the focus of PBC country-specific sessions.
In 2015, Sri Lanka’s peacebuilding plan, supported by the PBF, prioritized transitional justice and was largely informed by HRC resolution 30/1 on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. The design of peacebuilding priorities also benefited from the expertise of the former UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. In 2017 and 2019, Sri Lanka briefed the PBC on good practices in advancing peacebuilding and progress of PBF programmes supporting implementation of the HRC resolution. This is the only example to date of joined-up action between the PBC, HRC and PBF. Building on this good practice example, the PBC could be encouraged to play a bridging role with other relevant intergovernmental bodies and replicate such policy and programmatic coherence in other contexts. Member States could explore ways to further collaboration between the PBC and the HRC, while fully respecting their respective mandates. The sharing of experiences and good practices on the interlinkages between sustaining peace, development and human rights strengthens coherence in policy and operational responses to peacebuilding challenges.

### 3.3 Intergovernmental coherence

The human rights mechanisms integrate information and recommendations from the Security Council, the PBC, or other relevant bodies or actors, such as Special Representatives or Envoys of the Secretary-General, in their analyses, discussions and outcomes. At the same time, the work of the human rights mechanisms is not systematically known or integrated into the discussions of these bodies and actors and does not sufficiently inform their decisions.

To make information and recommendations from the human rights mechanisms more accessible and available, OHCHR established the Universal Human Rights Index and the Treaty Bodies Database. In addition to monitoring progress in implementation of recommendations, these tools can be helpful in identifying gaps, drawing patterns and trends, and highlighting specific issues or concerns of different groups or communities. The Universal Human Rights Index also compiles recommendations from all human rights mechanisms in relation to the sustainable development goals. The Secretary-General presents an annual report to the HRC compiling the recommendations and conclusions of the special procedures, highlighting for example those related to prevention or the sustainable development goals.

#### Special Procedures

The special procedures have a visible role in prevention. Over the years, the system has taken early action on several country situations and highlighted emerging issues, such as climate change, migration, human rights protection in the fight against terrorism and the shrinking space for civil society. Covering all sets of rights, they receive information from a range of stakeholders around the world and are often the first to draw the attention of the international community to emerging crises involving human rights violations and recommend early action to mitigate risks of violence and conflict. Through country visits, communications, public statements and reports, and dialogue with national and international stakeholders across sectors, they provide expert analyses and rights-based responses. In 2019, HRC resolution 42/6 on the role of prevention in the promotion and protection of human rights mandates a study to be prepared by OHCHR for submission to its 45th session (September 2020) on the contribution of the special procedures in assisting States and other stakeholders in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses.

The special procedures have engaged with the peacebuilding architecture over the years, for instance through exchange of information for country visits, and provision of advice on country situations or thematic areas, including to inform programmatic responses supported by the PBF. As such engagement has been ad-hoc or on a case-by-case basis, OHCHR and PBSO organized a working session with the Coordination Committee of the special procedures in 2019 to map entry points for further engagement and collaboration going forward.

#### UPR

As noted above, the UPR is the only human rights mechanism specifically mentioned in the 2016 twin resolutions. Grounded in the principles of universality and inclusivity, with all UN Member States subject to review, and on the basis of contributions from States, UN entities, civil society and national human rights institutions (NHRIs), UPR enjoys broad acceptance and is viewed credibly by a range of stakeholders. UPR recommendations covering human rights holistically have preventive potential and can be valuable for peacebuilding analysis, strategy and programming at the country level: identifying and assessing root causes and drivers of conflict and
violence; highlighting gaps to be addressed and proposing responses to mitigate risks. UPR provides a platform for dialogue and collaboration at the international and national levels – across sectors, and between civil society actors and the States under review. National consultations in the development of a State’s national report should more systematically include peacebuilding organizations for both input and design of solutions. For further information, please refer to OHCHR’s thematic paper on the UPR and sustaining peace.

Treaty Bodies: By analysing human rights developments utilizing submissions and information from States, civil society, NHRIs, UN entities and others, treaty bodies monitor implementation of international human rights treaties by States parties. Their work and recommendations can inform analyses of risks of conflict and violence, particularly for upstream structural and systemic prevention. The potential for treaty bodies to consider the linkages of human rights with peacebuilding and prevention in the review of State reports and in the formulation of General Comments or Recommendations could be further developed. For example, the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is intrinsically relevant to sustaining peace given the potential role of identity, discrimination and exclusion in fuelling violent conflict.

4. FUNDING

The integration of human rights in peacebuilding efforts at the country level is reflected in the support provided by the PBF to OHCHR – ensuring that issues of transitional justice, rule of law, strengthening of NHRIs, human rights education and human rights protection are essential elements of peacebuilding responses. As of January 2020, OHCHR was the ninth largest recipient of the PBF, having received approximately $30 million USD since 2009 in support of 58 projects across 23 countries. West and Central Africa represents the region of greater focus, followed by East and Southern Africa, Asia Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia. Most projects implemented by OHCHR were done in partnership with other UN entities, notably IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women. Among other interventions, PBF support to OHCHR allowed for the continuation of human rights presences in Burundi and Liberia, in periods of transition after the drawdown of UN peace operations; supported transitional justice and reconciliation processes in Colombia, Gambia, Guatemala, and Sri Lanka; and was instrumental to initiate support to the G5-Sahel on the establishment of its human rights compliance framework.

In Kyrgyzstan, the success of peacebuilding initiatives is strongly preconditioned on the realization of the rights of ethnic minorities. OHCHR-implemented PBF projects brought human rights issues considered sensitive into a constructive political discourse. For example, OHCHR established a ground-breaking internship programme for ethnic minorities in state institutions, aimed at increasing the very low number of ethnic minorities employed by the State. A range of victims of human rights violations directly benefited from PBF support geared to help ensure accountability and restoration of justice by easing tensions and promoting social cohesion. PBF-supported OHCHR interventions were crucial in pushing forward initiatives combatting discrimination in society through the development of comprehensive non-discrimination legislation and comprehensive trainings for the judiciary on non-discrimination and ethnic minority rights, as well as support to lawyers to litigate strategic cases promoting the rights of ethnic minorities.

In Lesotho, a PBF-supported OHCHR joint project with DPPA, UNDP and UN Women integrated human rights issues in peace consolidation and reform initiatives, for example in the security sector through implementation of the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) and capacity-building on human rights, and the creation of safe spaces for dialogue on past violations. Following several human rights trainings, additional requests were received, for example from the military; strengthened inter-sectoral cooperation and collaboration resulted in rare unified public messaging and commitment on the need for increased sector compliance with international human rights law for lasting peace.
5. PARTNERSHIPS

Regional Organizations: UN cooperation with the African Union (AU) has strengthened since the signing of the Frameworks on Peace and Security in 2017 and Development in 2018, respectively. The Human Rights Framework, which is one of the major commitments from the first AU-UN High-Level Dialogue on Human Rights in 2018, led by OHCHR, will be signed by the Chair of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on the margins of the 33rd AU Summit in February 2020. The Human Rights Framework will facilitate joint human rights actions, including on peace, emerging crises or conflict, transition, post-conflict, reconstruction and development contexts. OHCHR also continued to engage with AU human rights bodies. In 2019, Memoranda of Understanding were signed with the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. These complement the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between OHCHR and the AU Commission and the 2012 Addis Ababa Roadmap between the special mechanisms of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the UN. Within this cooperation framework, OHCHR and the AU organized the third AU-UN human rights technical dialogue in 2019 on common issues, such as the protection of children’s and women’s rights in situations of conflict and prevention at the regional and continental levels.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs): OHCHR is part of a joint project with the AU Commission and the World Bank on integrating human rights into the AU’s Continental Early Warning System, including human rights indicators for risk analysis and vulnerability assessment. The second phase, to be launched in 2020, will focus on early warning systems of the Regional Economic Communities, with a training component for staff, civil society and NHRIs. The UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report offers an analysis of the drivers of conflict which correlates to core human rights principles of non-discrimination, inclusion and participation to redress grievance. The World Bank’s new Strategy on Fragility, Conflict and Violence may offer further opportunities for engagement between OHCHR, the wider UN system and the IFIs on prevention.

Civil Society: 2019 saw a rising number of street protests in a large number of countries, against a wide spectrum of political systems, economies, governance models, and resource capacities. While each protest occurred in its own context and for its own reasons, it also denoted a fundamental failing of contemporary politics and economics. To an extent, the protests called for a renewed social contract between the State and the people, in which civil society play key roles in providing space to resolve grievances through peaceful means.

Peaceful protest is a human right, but also an important mechanism for ordinary people to air their grievances and seek redress through political participation rather than violence. The promotion, protection and expansion of civic space underpinned by human rights principles is essential for robust community-engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace processes. Participation needs to be respectful, meaningful, inclusive and non-discriminatory for legitimate dialogue to be achieved. Participants should not only be able to share their experiences, grievances and needs, but be empowered to actively engage in such processes. The design of peacebuilding interventions and implementation of peace agreements and political transitions should focus on developing an exit strategy with local resources for sustainable impact. This would allow for a shift away from the concept of vulnerable beneficiaries to communities and individuals as rights-holders and change agents. Transparency and accountability in these processes should accompany meaningful and inclusive participation, with measures to ensure the safety and protection of civil society actors, including for engaging with the UN. Strengthening and institutionalising the collaboration between human rights and peacebuilding civil society actors is therefore crucial – taking advantage of the perspectives, analytical frameworks and capacities that each may bring to enrich analyses of risks, conflict and violence and responses.

NHRIs: Mandated to promote and ensure respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, NHRIs can undertake various functions, including human rights investigations, monitoring and reporting, handling complaints, promoting human rights education, and providing human rights advice to governments and other competent bodies, such as parliaments. As state institutions that operate independently from government, NHRIs are a bridge between the state and the people, and between communities. They can therefore be instrumental in early warning and preventing violence and conflict, and can advise on crisis management, political settlement, peacebuilding or conflict resolution processes. NHRIs can also promote healing, reconciliation, transitional
justice and accountability by applying quasi- and non-judicial measures, including reparations and truth-seeking. They can be called upon to assist in the establishment of peacebuilding and transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions. Some peace agreements have also provided for the establishment of NHRIs – as in the case of Northern Ireland and Rwanda – to prevent future outbreaks of conflict.

The 2015 Kyiv Declaration called for a stronger role of NHRIs in preventing conflict and ensuring respect for human rights and their protection in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Recommended actions include monitoring the situation of human rights, including the most vulnerable, marginalized and minorities groups in fragile situations, and identifying early signs of a possible conflict; promoting dialogue between and with conflicting parties; ensuring that human rights issues are at the centre of negotiations between the conflicting parties, including in peace agreements; undertaking measures to overcome the consequences of conflict, including past human rights violations; and undertaking human rights education, training and awareness-raising, including for armed forces and law enforcement.

In Nigeria, OHCHR collaborated with the NHRI to resolve conflict between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt. Through an OHCHR grant, the NHRI deployed human rights monitors and contributed to the implementation of the National Livestock Transformation programme, which aims to address the root causes of the clashes through improved livestock production.

Based on the 1998 Belfast Peace Agreement, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission focuses on police reform, recovery of the disappeared, development of oversight and accountability mechanisms and the promotion of human rights and equality to ensure a durable peace. It also promotes human rights-compliant mechanisms for investigating deaths and serious injuries arising from the conflict and ensuring access to justice and accountability, through reparations and remedies for victims and survivors.

Sierra Leone’s Human Rights Commission addresses marginalization, discrimination, unfair distribution of resources and poor provision of social services as some of the root causes of conflict. When established in 2004, the NHRI was tasked to follow-up on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): developing the TRC’s Archives Access Policy and creating a computerized database of all testimonies; contributing to the establishment of the Trust Fund for War Victims and fundraising; and engaging in Sierra Leone’s UPR by including TRC recommendations in its submission.

Parliaments: When societies are increasingly divided, parliaments can be instrumental in crisis prevention and recovery, promoting respect, dialogue and compromise between parties, and supporting the creation or rebuilding of resilient, inclusive and peaceful societies. Parliaments can also translate international commitments and the recommendations of human rights mechanisms into national policies and laws. The resolution adopted at the 138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development calls on all parliaments to contribute to sustaining peace and the sustainable development goals. Using the preventive potential of the parliamentary process, parliaments can mitigate and resolve conflict, including through human rights monitoring, ensuring protection, establishing inclusive dialogue processes, and mediation to peacefully address the needs of all segments of society.
RECOMMENDATIONS

A. POLICY AND OPERATIONAL COHERENCE

» Reaffirm the intrinsic link between human rights, sustainable development and sustaining peace, and the need for a three-pillar approach;

» Ensure that UN senior leadership (SRSGs, Special Envoys, Resident Coordinators, Humanitarian Coordinators) have access to timely and adequate human rights expertise, including resources and tools to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts;

» Consistently apply UN human rights policies, including the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on UN support to non-UN security forces (HRDDP), in policy, operational and programmatic interventions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

» Strengthen UN joined-up analysis of risks and actions for sustaining peace, inclusive of human rights issues, such as inequality and exclusion, and making use of available and tested frameworks and processes;

» Support human rights education, particularly of youth (Security Council resolution 2250; World Programme for Human Rights Education), as key to meaningful and inclusive participation in peacebuilding and sustaining peace processes;

» Encourage the sharing of positive experiences and good practices in the HRC and PBC on the interlinkages between sustaining peace, development and human rights to foster policy and operational coherence in response to peacebuilding challenges.

B. INSTITUTIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COHERENCE

» Encourage and strengthen engagement of the peacebuilding architecture with relevant intergovernmental and human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the HRC as stated in A/72/707-S/2018/43;

» Consider how the recommendations of the HRC and the human rights mechanisms can be further integrated into the work of the peacebuilding architecture, including through implementation of the recommendations of the report mandated by HRC resolution 38/18 (A/HRC/43/37);

» Encourage the peacebuilding architecture to strengthen engagement with Member States implementing paragraph 11 of the 2016 resolutions;

» Encourage Member States to use information from human rights mechanisms for early warning and analysis, identifying root causes and drivers of social unrest, violence and conflict, and facilitating dialogue and consultation with all segments of society.

» Encourage the sharing of positive experiences and good practices in the HRC and PBC on the interlinkages between sustaining peace, development and human rights to foster policy and operational coherence in response to peacebuilding challenges.
RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

C. FUNDING AND RESOURCES

» Encourage the peacebuilding architecture to further engage with human rights actors and mechanisms to inform the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions supported by the PBF;

» Consider how the PBF can support interventions and approaches that further implementation of recommendations from human rights bodies and mechanisms, and promote engagement and participation of peacebuilding actors in the work of these mechanisms;

» Continue to develop integrated and three-pillar UN actions and responses to peacebuilding and sustaining peace – including the allocation and deployment of dedicated capacity to support Resident Coordinators and UN country teams, at both country and regional levels.

D. PARTNERSHIPS

» Strengthen engagement and partnership of the peacebuilding architecture and peacebuilding actors with human rights actors, including NHRIs, human rights and justice ministries, civil society organizations, human rights mechanisms and OHCHR;

» Encourage peacebuilding organizations and actors to engage and cooperate with the human rights mechanisms – including through the provision of information and analyses;

» Encourage peacebuilding and human rights organizations to enhance and institutionalize collaboration;

» Encourage NHRIs to expand their networks to include peacebuilding organizations.