

## Chair's Summary

### Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation On the 2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

10 June 2020

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On 10 June 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea convened an Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. The Consultation was chaired by Director-General for International Organizations Chung Byung-ha in a video format. It was the last regional consultation for the informal phase of the review process, following previous ones on the Middle East, Europe, African and Eurasia regions.

The objective of the Consultation is to inform the process of the 2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture with Asia-Pacific perspectives and experiences and to assess peacebuilding gains and priorities, particularly in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Participants from the foreign and defense ministries of 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the UN Secretariat, the Development Coordination Office of the UN and such think tanks as the United Nations University discussed ways to support UN peacebuilding operations amid the COVID-19 situation as well as experiences of the Asia and Pacific region.

Mr. Adam Day, Head of Programmes at the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, Mr. Neil Buhne, Regional Director at the UN Development Coordination Office for Asia-Pacific, and Ms. Barrie Freeman, Deputy and Political Director of the Peacebuilding Support Office briefed the participants on 3 primary themes of the consultation: conflict dynamics in Asia and the Pacific and its implication in the peacebuilding work; socio-economic outcomes and development tools; and inclusivity in the peacebuilding process. Following the panel presentations, country representatives delivered their statements.

Participants : Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Viet Nam, UN DPPA, UN PBSO, UN DCO, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, New York University Center on International Cooperation, International Peace Institute

Participants underscored the following messages:

#### **1 Conflict Dynamics in the Asia-Pacific Region**

##### **1.1 Understanding of the root causes and regional focus**

Participants

- Recognize the diverse nature of challenges and conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region and call for a context-specific and conflict-sensitive approach to address patterns of systematic exclusion and other root causes of conflicts.
- Reiterate that having a regional focus can help UN teams to better coordinate with member states in the region so that they can address issues like inequality, marginalization, and grievances in local communities.
- Emphasize the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in raising awareness of specific country situations, bringing about an integrated support, and allowing UN actors to

carve out political space and identify entry points for peacebuilding action with an in-depth understanding of the context and priorities of the country.

## **1.2 Understanding of new threats**

Participants

- Recognize that despite the diversity of the region, most of the conflicts occurring in the region are proving to last longer, resulting in a cumulative impact over time with other trends such as infectious diseases, migration, climate change, and other forms of new security threats.
- Highlight that climate change, in particular, affects and complicates conflict, social and political dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, already heightening risks in the areas of human security, livelihoods, population movements, urbanization, and cross border tensions.

## **2 Socio-Economic Outcomes and Development Tools**

### **2.1 COVID-19**

Participants

- Recognize that COVID-19 is having far reaching implications that cut across all aspects of human life and increasingly affecting the operating context of UN actors for peace operations with access problems and rising tensions.
- Emphasize that ongoing health emergencies in the region is complicated and multiplied by humanitarian and economic emergencies, exacerbating existing inequalities, undermining social cohesion, and straining the capacity of governance institutions, and subsequently increasing the risks of instability and violence.
- Point out that the COVID-19 situation is in a way limiting the UN's peacebuilding operations, but also serving as an opportunity to promote all-out discussions and activities on new threats, such as infectious diseases, poverty and climate change, in the peacebuilding process.
- Stress that the Peacebuilding Fund needs to assess impact of COVID-19 on conflict and peacebuilding while providing timely, catalytic and risk-tolerant support to help prevent and mitigate conflict risks.

### **2.2 Socio-Economic Capacities**

Participants

- Recognize the root causes of conflict are often related to socio-economic aspects.
- Reiterate that in a new operating environment that COVID-19 created, one of the major peacebuilding goals should be strengthening socio-economic capacities of the local community and population through development tools, and that will be the best strategies for conflict prevention.
- Underscore that a more agile and integrated development system is needed to allow UN system to produce socio-economic plans that are multi-dimensional, prioritized and risk-informed to better support countries to respond to the challenges of new threats.

## **2.3 Development Tools**

### Participants

- Recognize that inclusive and sustainable development, grounded in the protection and promotion of human rights, gender equality, and the goal of leaving no one behind, is the best defense against violent conflict.
- Reiterate that the development activities have empowered local communities by recognizing their ownership and taking into account local values and attributes.
- Express concerns about the possibility of future peacebuilding efforts being undermined by different factors, such as priority shifting from development to pandemic responses.
- Stress that innovative financing is critical to maintaining stable and predictable peacebuilding programs.

## **3 Inclusivity in the Peacebuilding Process**

### **3.1 Importance of Inclusive and Democratic Governance**

#### Participants

- Acknowledge that the responsibility for sustaining peace should be broadly shared with the entire society.
- Emphasize the importance of transparent, democratic, and stable governance which enables and encourages broader civil participation and integrated planning.
- Reiterate that inclusive peacebuilding can enhance sovereignty and national ownership as the process helps to consolidate trust and mutual accountability between the citizens and the state.
- Highlight the cases of women and youth-led peacebuilding efforts based on the principles of inclusivity across the region and recognize the potential of the region's youth as a positive force for peace and development.
- Point out that more countries are currently being engaged in further efforts to systematically streamline the engagement of women and young people in the full continuum of peace processes with the assistance of various UN entities.
- Underscore the growing importance of access to technology in encouraging further participation of more stakeholders and caution against the potential of the digital divide worsening inequality.

### **3.2 Role of the Regional Organizations**

#### Participants

- Highlight the role of the regional organizations such as ASEAN for providing an effective forum for prevention, early detection and response to potential conflicts.

### **3.3 Role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund**

#### Participants

- Recognize the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in convening an inclusive platform for all relevant stakeholders, from national government actors, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions to local and civil society partners, including women and youth groups.

- Welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's work to promote women and youth in the peacebuilding process, proving how a more inclusive, whole-of-society approach can yield better outcomes.
- Underline that the Peacebuilding Fund has been looking into increasing direct support to civil society and local peacebuilding actors, and its works in many countries in the region has significantly contributed to building a more inclusive society and trust between citizens and the state.

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