

PBC Chair Remarks
at
United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research
Conference Plenary Session on 'conflict legacies and post-conflict recovery'

17 May 2022

1. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to this important discussion to share the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) experience in providing political accompaniment and advocacy to countries affected by conflict, through various phases of their efforts to address root causes of conflicts, prevent relapse into violent conflict and build durable peace and sustainable development.

2. Since its inception, the PBC has engaged with a total of 23 countries and regions, the majority in Africa but also in Latin America (Colombia), Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. In the last few years, the Commission has created space for more local actors, particularly women and young peacebuilders representing civil society, academia, and the private sector. Its work has increasingly benefited from the insights of regional and subregional organizations and international financial institutions. More importantly, the Commission has listened carefully to the countries that engage with it, and focused on delivering the support that they need – be it funding for peacebuilding priorities in Burkina Faso, attention to the transitional justice process in the Gambia, focus on an inclusive peace process in Colombia, awareness about climate security challenges in the Sahel and the Pacific Islands, or mobilization of resources for a smooth United Nations transition in Guinea Bissau.

3. Since the outset of the pandemic, the Commission raised awareness about disproportionate and multi-faceted toll of COVID-19 on conflict-affected countries. The Commission was quick to adjust its work programme, expand demand-driven and flexible engagements with affected countries and regions, and call for a stronger focus on countries in armed conflict and transition situations with a view to 'leaving no one behind'. In addition to calling for universal vaccine equity and crisis preparedness, the Commission pushed for a reinvigorated multilateralism and a shift in focus from a response-oriented system to a nationally-led prevention system, including building responsive and viable institutions at the national and local levels while promoting inclusive governance through a whole-of-government approach.

4. The unique contributions of the PBC have been recognized by the Secretary-General, who in his recent report on Our Common Agenda called for an expanded focus of its work. This is now reflected into the 2022 PBC programme of work, which calls for greater results. During a recent informal retreat, the Commission discussed what that means in different contexts, and how the PBC can better deliver in the face of continuing challenges – from the ongoing COVID-19

pandemic to worsening climate impacts, growing humanitarian crises and conflicts, and the continued unraveling of hard-won gains in curbing poverty and closing the gender divide. The retreat offered an opportunity to renew our resolve to forge partnerships and seek innovative solutions in addressing the multitude of challenges that demand we work together.

5. The Commission has the potential to set a global example in terms of effective multistakeholder engagement and multilateralism, leveraging the strength and energy of the different actors that it brings to the table. As some of you have pointed out in recent PBC meetings, 2022 marks the halfway point to the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs and the way forward requires tapping into and working with the best of what different actors have to offer, from local governments to private sector and CEOs, universities, and local communities. The PBC is uniquely positioned to do that.

6. Whether the Commission can remain fit for purpose in the face of increasingly complex challenges to peacebuilding will depend on its ability to ensure timely and effective responses in support of nationally-owned peacebuilding priorities. Its recent efforts to ensure that its separate engagements with Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone were in alignment with national and regional initiatives that focus on development as well as issues of marginalization and exclusion, sustainable reintegration of combatants, refugees and returnees, natural disasters and climate change – are cases in point.

7. While striving to meet national peacebuilding needs, the Commission will also continue to focus on enhancing its advisory and bridging role with respect to the General Assembly and the Security Council and its bridging role between the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This unique mandate – in combination with its flexible working methods – have allowed the Commission to coordinate and scale up UN system long-term coherent support to conflict-affected countries.

8. The Commission will also continue to share lessons learned, identify scalable good practices and innovative solutions, and build capacities through exchanges of expertise between all relevant stakeholders. In this context, the Commission is committed to promoting South-South and triangular cooperation in addressing common challenges.

9. All along, the Commission has noted with concern that adequate, predictable and sustained financing remains a critical challenge as financial flows to conflict-affected countries have come under increasing pressure, particularly Official Development Assistance devoted to peacebuilding. It has stressed the need to enhance financial support for countries in transition phases, where United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions are scaling down, to avoid national authorities and local communities losing funding at a time when they assume greater responsibilities. The Commission is committed to continue identifying creative

peacebuilding financing, and non-financial contributions, such as capacity building and technical cooperation. It is hoped that with the ongoing efforts and collective commitment, a satisfactory action-oriented result will be achieved in the follow up to the high-level GA meeting on financing for peacebuilding held on 29 April 2022, including increased contributions to the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund.