

**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
on the Immediate Socio-Economic response to COVID-19
5 June 2020
Chair's Summary**

1. On 5 June, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard, convened a virtual Ambassadorial-level meeting on the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting focused on tailoring socio-economic responses to the pandemic to the unique challenges posed in peacebuilding contexts, with special consideration given to community resilience and social innovation.
2. The Chair noted the devastating impact of the pandemic on communities, jobs and economies but also acknowledged the innovative solutions by the public and private sectors, governments, communities and entrepreneurs to help the economy and provide employment. The Chair underscored that the crisis was a test for multilateralism and called for improved coordination among all stakeholders to build back better.
3. The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination, Mr. Robert Piper, briefed on the *UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19* (“the UN Framework”), which complements the UN humanitarian and health responses. He informed that social cohesion is one of the five pillars of the strategy that would be of particular interest to the PBC. This pillar calls for the UN system to engage and support Governments in social cohesion and thinking preventatively about how the crisis could derail important development gains. ASG Piper also explained that the strategy contains components around inclusive and equitable responses centered on intercommunal social cohesion, countering hate speech and stigmatization, and addressing trauma. He noted that the financing strategy depends heavily on international financial institutions, and the intention is to build on the pioneering work undertaken by PBSO, including with the World Bank, to develop joint strategies to support governments. There is concern about ODA trends, especially given the potential for a deep recession, and the subsequent impact on aid flows, possibly resulting in a shift of resources away from development and structural investments to humanitarian and emergency aid. In looking to build back better, the ASG highlighted that the crisis could lead to a greater appreciation for multilateralism and regional collaboration.
4. The Special Advisor to the Administrator of UNDP, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, briefed on ways to strengthen the peacebuilding “thumbprint” in the UN Framework and its five pillars. He reported that economic growth in several countries is contracting by double digits in several countries and that conflict-affected countries are particularly at risk given existing vulnerabilities in health and governance systems. Mr. Mar Dieye noted that in some countries the social contract between states and population is further eroding due to public frustration

about the government's response. The potential politicization of a government response could increase political animosities and further undermine the social contract and the trust needed to combat the pandemic. Despite these challenges, Mr. Mar Dieye explained, local peacebuilders, including women and youth, are finding innovative ways to bring communities together and share life-saving public information. He acknowledged that the UN Framework will need to triangulate with existing peace and reconciliation initiatives in conflict-affected contexts, with a strong conflict-sensitive and risk-adaptive lens. For conflict-affected countries, the response must be both institution-based and people-centered, with peacebuilding at the heart of sustainable recovery, rebuilding trust and social cohesion. UNDP is currently reviewing the submissions of 61 countries undertaking socio-economic impact assessments, to ensure countries are adequately sensitive to social cohesion and peacebuilding dimensions of COVID-19. Mr. Mar Dieye also informed that UNDP was working with PBSO to finalize UN guidance on conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

5. The Founder and Executive Chair of Janngo, Ms. Fatoumata Ba, briefed on the health, economic and social challenges of COVID-19 in Africa. Currently, there are roughly 150,000 cases in Africa according to the African CDC, but without effective and prompt action, she informed, cases could rise to 500 million people in the next 100 days. Regarding the economic impact, she briefed that along with the potential loss of \$39 billion for the continent, small medium enterprises (SMEs) which employ 90 percent of the workforce in Africa, would suffer severe consequences. She informed that the needs of SMEs are not often addressed in development and recovery plans, and additionally are not eligible for traditional bank incentives. For solutions to challenges in the health sector, Ms. Ba informed of a private sector initiative under the leadership of African Union Special Envoy Strive Masiyiwa on broadening access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), test kits and other equipment, and that Janngo Africa would soon be launching a platform to help facilitate procurement for all 55 African Union member states as necessary. As a 65 percent women-led venture capital fund, Janngo will also be investing 50 percent of proceeds to start-ups founded by or benefitting women entrepreneurs. Ms. Ba stressed that the international community has a duty to ensure that current efforts and investments are filtering down to beneficiaries not captured by the traditional banking system, and underscored the importance of inclusivity in building back better.
6. The Somalia Country Director, Life and Peace Institute, Mr. Adan Kabelo, informed of the concern among peacebuilders in Somalia about resources and the future of peacebuilding in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. He noted the recent creation of a peacebuilding working group for international and local organizations active in COVID-19 interventions to ensure conflict sensitivity. He underscored the need to invest in innovative approaches for communications since COVID-19 has limited in person collaboration. Mr. Kabelo highlighted the role of women in sustaining livelihoods, especially as small business owners,, and noted that investing in them would be critical for economic recovery. . He expressed concern regarding the decline

in remittances, an important source of income for many Somalis. He further noted that access to justice was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions and was concerned about how this would impact intercommunal dialogue and trauma healing.

7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They commended the launch of the UN Framework which would be crucial to efforts to address the pandemic and build back better, as well as the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. There was acknowledgement of the adverse effects of the pandemic on the socio-economic situation, with hyperinflation, rising unemployment, reduction in remittances and the impact on social service provision and on the private sector.
- They underlined the importance of the bridging role of the PBC as a convening platform for ensuring coherence and coordinated international response to peacebuilding-related challenges posed by COVID-19. They also called for stronger synergies between the PBC and PBF. Multilateralism, regional and cross border cooperation, national ownership, local peacebuilders (including women and youth) were identified as crucial factors in ensuring a whole of society response to the pandemic.
- They emphasized the critical need to foster trust between authorities and society and strengthening institution building, particularly in financing, health and rule of law. They acknowledged the importance of sharing good practices for socio-economic recovery, as well as enhancing the links between humanitarian, peace and security and development pillars.
- They welcomed a UN system-wide response, with emphasis on the complementary participation and contribution of Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams. They underscored the important role of regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions on leveraging their resources in support.
- Some Members States recalled the Mano River Union engagement framework as a potential template for PBC involvement in COVID-19 response to conflict-affected countries to safeguard the peace dividends.

8. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, informed that the PBF was working closely with DCO, UNDP and the UN country teams to ensure programming complemented response, including support to crisis management, communications, partnerships, and intercommunal dynamics. The PBF is also working in a

coordinated, collaborative and mutually reinforcing manner with the COVID-19 Multi Partner Trust Fund, the humanitarian fund, CERF and SDG fund.

9. In conclusion, the PBC Chair underscored that the meeting highlighted the urgency to act together in a multilateral and more inclusive way to tackle peacebuilding challenges and said that the PBC continues to stand ready to support conflict-affected countries as they respond to challenges posed by COVID-19.