

**Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and
the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
(23 October 2020)**

Summary of the Discussion

1. On 23 October, the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held, virtually, an informal consultative meeting to identify ways of (i) further enhancing cooperation between the two bodies in support of peacebuilding in Africa, and (ii) supporting effective responses to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) activities in African countries and regions under the consideration of the PBC, with a focus on the role of women and youth. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Bob Rae (PBC) and H.E. Mr. Osama Abdel Khalek (AUPSC). In their opening remarks, the **Chair of the PBC** highlighted opportunities for stronger cooperation between the two entities.
2. **H.E. Mr. Osama Abdel Khalek, Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council**, reiterated the need to enhance cooperation between the two bodies with the objective of advancing peacebuilding priorities in Africa, particularly in contexts under the consideration of the PBC. He underscored the importance of engaging more with the RECs, including by creating more channels of coordination to guarantee complementary and synergies. He encouraged continuous investments in support of African-led peacebuilding initiatives and proposed more frequent engagement between the two bodies to explore appropriate opportunities for cooperation and support.
3. **H.E. Mr. Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security**, noted that the multitude of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic called for closer cooperation between the AU and the UN. He stressed that exclusive military approaches could not address effectively the crises in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions and explained that multi-sectoral, cross-cutting solutions based on comparative advantages were needed. He informed that the AUPSC had adopted in September 2020 the African Common Position on peacebuilding for the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review, which identified 11 priorities from the African perspective, namely: financing for peacebuilding; conflict prevention; managing transitions; effective governance; transitional justice; women, peace and security; youth and peacebuilding; preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism; enhancing health systems; regional approach to peacebuilding; and partnerships for peacebuilding. He expressed hope that the Common African Position would be considered and would help strengthening AU-UN cooperation on peacebuilding and addressing the root causes of conflict and instability. He commended the Secretary-General's proposals for adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding and called for greater attention to conflict-sensitive investments for sustainable

development. He explained that the AU Peace Fund was not designed to support large scale and long-term peacebuilding programs and therefore stressed the need for complementary with the SG's Peacebuilding Fund, the UNDP-led Regional Stabilization Facility for the Lake Chad Basin, and other funding mechanisms and facilities.

4. **H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, Chair of the PBC**, indicated that St. Vincent and the Grenadines and New Zealand, as co-facilitators of the inter-governmental phase of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, were examining how to improve the global peacebuilding architecture. He explained that there was need for a broader understanding of the severity of instability which was being exacerbated by COVID-19. He agreed that conflict could not be addressed by purely military approaches and, in that regard, commended the AUPSC endorsed African Common Position, which articulated a wide range of priorities for multi-sectoral approaches to peacebuilding, with a focus on addressing the root causes of conflict in a comprehensive manner, including by empowering youth and women to play a leading role and by taking into consideration socio-economic and environmental factors. Recognising the importance of Africa in the PBC agenda, he encouraged continuous and action-oriented dialogue between the two organs.
5. **Ms. Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union**, noted that COVID-19 travel restrictions had not stopped peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts and remote dialogue. She added that the complexity of current conflicts in the continent required a hybrid of political and development initiatives. She recalled that the African Common Position had placed emphasis on prevention and stressed in that regard the crucial role of the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and AU's PCRD agenda. She recalled that since the signing of the Joint AU-UN Framework for peace and security in 2017 and as part of the UN support to the AU Initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa, the AU and the UN were working closer together across the continent, including in the Lake Chad Basin and in the Central African Republic with ECCAS; in West Africa, including Mali, with ECOWAS; and in South Sudan with IGAD. She noted that on conflict prevention, the UN was supporting the AU Continental Structural Prevention Framework and its methodology for structural vulnerability assessments. She underscored the UN's support to the African Women Leaders Network, the deployment of FemWise-Africa mediators, the full operationalization of the AU Mediation Support Unit, and the development of a continental human security index. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of inclusion and the promotion of women in peacebuilding.
6. **Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support**, observed that the meeting was taking place against a backdrop of three major peacebuilding challenges: a multifaceted crisis due to COVID-19 which is affecting women disproportionately; the fact that women continue to be excluded from peace processes while

being at the forefront of grassroots peace efforts; and the lack of predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding. He agreed that the pandemic was making more important than ever to promote global solidarity and partnerships. He recalled that, from 2017 to 2019, the Peacebuilding Fund had invested over \$394 million in Africa and that, with the pandemic, the Fund had reallocated resources to support national response plans as well as to reduce stigmatization and the spread of misinformation. He underlined that the Fund continued to support the work of women and youth across the continent, including in Burundi and Liberia. This work also complemented the UN's support to the AU Initiative on Silencing the Guns. He emphasized the need to join forces and to build back better towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Africa.

7. In the interaction, Member States made the following observations:

- They recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic was posing unprecedented challenges in the countries and regions under the consideration of the Peacebuilding Commission (West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa, Lake Chad Basin and the Great Lakes), and stressed the crucial role of women and youth to help address them. They noted with concern the negative impact of the pandemic on peacebuilding and PCRD efforts and discussed possible means of mitigating it, including through strengthened protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups. They recognised AU's leadership in response to the pandemic, as demonstrated by its numerous efforts to promote coordinated responses.
- They commended the AU's Initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa and its related theme of the year for 2020 "Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's development". They agreed that it remains highly relevant in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, since AU efforts that fall under this strategic framework contribute to good governance, peace, security and development. They welcomed the wide-ranging support that the UN system provides to the Initiative and encouraged more action to further empower African women- and youth-led initiatives.
- They recalled the powerful testimonies of women peacebuilders from across Africa to the AUPSC and the PBC throughout the year, which clearly expressed concerns about the alarming spike in sexual and gender-based violence as a result of the pandemic and how related restrictive measures have limited women's meaningful participation in peace processes. AUPSC and PBC members agreed that they should work closely together to ensure greater support to women- and youth-led peacebuilding organisations and initiatives. In recognition of the vital role women can and should play in building and sustaining peace in Africa, they commended the Peacebuilding Fund for allocating a significant amount in support of women and youth engagement across the continent.

- Building on the PBC input into and the AUPSC-endorsed Common African Position on the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture, the two bodies stressed the need for closer collaboration and information sharing between the African Union and the United Nations in partnership with relevant RECs/RMs and other local and international stakeholders, while underscoring the need for peacebuilding support to be based on principles of national ownership and sovereignty. They also underscored the need to ensure complementarities and coordination between different financial mechanisms of the AU and the UN. They recognized the importance of AU-owned and led PCRD efforts on the continent, and in that regard welcomed the establishment of the AU Centre for PCRD as a positive step in further developing and enhancing the implementation of AU-PCRD strategies in Africa.
- They agreed that trilateral cooperation between the United Nations, regional/sub-regional organizations and international financial institutions has proved to be beneficial in some parts of the continent and encouraged similar approaches going forward in support of countries emerging from conflict or going through complex transitions.
- They lamented that financing for peacebuilding activities remains insufficient and expressed hope that the PBC annual session scheduled for 2 November and relevant future PBC meetings would take into account messages on financing contained in the Common African Position.
- They encouraged further future discussions on cross-cutting issues of mutual interest, including financing, institution building, and women, peace and security. They suggested to hold more frequent meetings between the two bodies, including at the expert level, and, if resources permit it, to consider a future joint retreat in 2021.
