

**Peacebuilding Commission**  
**Informal meeting of the Organizational Committee**  
**18 January 2016**

**Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion**

**Background**

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On 18 December 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr. Oloof Skoog, Chair of the PBC, on "Peacebuilding trends and threats in West Africa". The meeting presented an opportunity to discuss regional challenges to peacebuilding and the role the PBC could play in supporting West African countries achieve sustainable peace. Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, briefed the Commission. At the outset, all speakers expressed their condolences to the Government of Burkina Faso and to those of the victims of the terrorist attack that took place on 15 January in Ouagadougou.

1. In his introductory remarks, the Chair referred to a number of challenges the region was facing and the threat they posed to building sustainable peace. He welcomed the flexibility of the PBC to address issues beyond the country-specific focus and to raise the discussion to a regional level, exploring coherent strategies and approaches towards achieving sustainable peace in West Africa. He noted that such flexibility was an important element when the Commission adopted a regional approach to support the UN response to the Ebola outbreak. Welcoming the presence of USG Feltman and SRSG Chambas, and building on the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, the Chair also underscored the importance for the Commission to focus its attention on early conflict prevention priorities.
2. Mr. Feltman highlighted DPA's role in preventing conflicts through early warning, diplomacy and mediation and underscored the mutually reinforcing engagement of DPA and the PBC in this regard. He stressed the importance of the PBC in engaging key stakeholders at critical junctures, and welcomed the strong partnership and excellent cooperation of DPA, the PBC, PBSO and PBF in the region. Mr. Feltman noted that West Africa faced key peacebuilding challenges, including issues related to governance and political inclusion, transnational organized crime, violent extremism and terrorism, electoral-related violence and the recovery from the Ebola crisis. DPA was engaging with national, regional and sub-regional actors, through the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA), the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel (OSES), and the Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea Bissau (UNIOGBIS), to address those challenges. Looking at the year ahead, prospective elections in a number of countries, the consolidation of gains in Burkina Faso, and addressing the threat of terrorism were among the key challenges. In this regard, he welcomed the collaboration with the PBC and PBSO in support of conflict prevention.

3. Mr. Chambas welcomed the positive progress made in West Africa, such as the holding of peaceful and participatory elections in several countries. He highlighted the cooperation between UNOWA and the PBC, as well as the AU, ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the Organisation de la Francophonie in providing guidance to countries in transition, such as in Burkina Faso, and supporting political dialogue processes, as in Guinea. He stressed the importance of engaging with governments, Electoral Management Bodies, political parties, civil society and other actors and stated that no lasting nation-building would be possible without national reconciliation and the fight against impunity. He stated that UNOWA was cooperating with UNOCA and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to fully operationalize the Multi National Joint Task Force to tackle violent extremism and terrorism, supporting the West Africa Coast Initiative to curb transnational organized crime, as well as the Mano River Union in their "Cross-Border Security Strategy". In this context, Mr. Chambas noted how important it was to be supported by the PBC to further strengthen the Joint Border Security Strategy.
4. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, welcomed the innovative and flexible working methods of the PBC. He noted that the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, which started in 2015 and was about to be concluded, provided momentum for the PBC to go beyond the few countries on its agenda. The discussions on Papua New Guinea, Burkina Faso and Somalia in 2015 proved that the PBC could undertake more flexible engagements with a broad range of countries. Echoing the earlier remarks on the Commission's achievements in support of the international community's response to the Ebola outbreak, this meeting further pointed to the critical role the PBC could play in addressing issues related to the regional dimensions of peacebuilding. Expressing his appreciation for the excellent cooperation between PBSO, DPA and UNOWA, he highlighted the following main opportunities for the consolidation of peacebuilding gains in 2016: 1) consolidating and sustaining the gains achieved through successful democratic processes including elections completed or under way; 2) the growing imperative to address sub-regional challenges together; 3) the SDGs framework and the recent resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security on the global level.
5. He noted that the peacebuilding opportunities the Peacebuilding Fund would pay particular attention to, included Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Liberia, working with key partners in the region.
6. Cross border initiatives and sub-regional programming such as in Mali and Niger were also a priority, along with efforts of the PBC's and PBF to build a strategic partnership with the AU, ECOWAS and the African Development Bank. Projects engaging with youth in peacebuilding, and gender responsive peacebuilding initiatives, such as "case de veille" were also high on the agenda, all of which had to be linked to the regional or sub-regional level in order to respond to peacebuilding challenges. It was important that PBSO would better communicate the results achieved with the PBF (such as the elections in Cote d'Ivoire and in Guinea), and to better positioning future PBF projects in support of political processes.

7. In the subsequent open discussions, Member States and Organizations welcomed the initiative to convene this meeting and expressed appreciation for the new and more flexible approach of the PBC. This allowed the Commission to provide an important platform for policy discussions on the regional dimensions of peacebuilding. The discussions focused mainly on the following issues:

- Support for the PBC to continue with its new and flexible approach and to consider regional and sub-regional challenges to peacebuilding.
- The importance of prevention as a strategy to finding lasting solutions to crises.
- Several delegations welcomed the positive signs emerging from the region in 2015, in particular in terms of democracy and related electoral processes. They, however, recognized that a number of important challenges still remained and that the support of the international community would be crucial. Challenges mentioned included violent extremism, radicalisation of youth, migration, domestic and cross-border security, and epidemics such as Ebola. In this context, several delegations called for stronger synergies within the UN system.
- The improvement of socio-economic development on a national and regional level in order to address root causes for, and prevent the spread of, violent extremism, as well as to build sustainable peace.
- The inclusion of young people in peacebuilding initiatives and measures to prevent them from engaging in violent extremism. Delegations also expressed the need to address the challenge of the refugee and IDP's situation in the region.
- The need for integrated and gender balanced approaches to tackle challenges.
- Delegations acknowledged the efforts that the region had made, especially during the Ebola-crisis, as well as several of the peaceful elections which took place in 2015. They stressed the need to further build resilience and to promote national reconciliation, the rule of law and security sector reform to achieve sustainable peace and stability. Delegations stressed challenges regarding upcoming elections and other issues and expressed the need to stay involved and assist in post transition efforts.
- The 2015 Peacebuilding Review represents an important opportunity to improve the work of the Commission and the predictability of financing for peacebuilding.

8. The Chair welcomed the strong support by Member States for the Commission's more flexible engagement and stressed the importance of conflict prevention and reliable contributions to the PBF. He thanked the speakers for their briefings and welcomed the positive developments in the region during the past year.

#### **Other matters**

9. The Chair informed Member States about the next meeting of the Organizational Committee, scheduled for 3 February, which would address the formal adoption of the annual report of the PBC and the election of the next Chair of the PBC.

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