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Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

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## Letter dated 2 July 2020 from the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In accordance with the terms of reference of the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture,<sup>1</sup> endorsed in October 2019, I wish to share with the General Assembly and the Security Council the main elements that have emerged from a series of consultations that the Peacebuilding Commission convened and which were open to all Member States of the United Nations, relevant parts of the United Nations system, civil society representatives and independent experts, with a view to contributing to the formal phase of the review. Drawing from critical peacebuilding priorities in the Commission's country-specific, regional and thematic engagements since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, and building on the primacy of national ownership in peacebuilding processes, whereby the responsibility for building and sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders, the consultations focused on peacebuilding in United Nations transition contexts, the role of women in peacebuilding and the importance of institution-building, United Nations system-wide engagement, financing and partnerships for peacebuilding, taking also into consideration the fast-evolving coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its implications for peacebuilding. In view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the majority of the consultations were conducted virtually.<sup>2</sup>

### Effective support in United Nations transition contexts

#### *Areas of progress*

Since 2016, the United Nations has increased support for planning, leadership and the resourcing of transition processes through (a) recent United Nations reforms, which have helped the organization to respond in more tailored and coherent ways to

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/suggested\\_tors\\_for\\_the\\_2020\\_review\\_-\\_final1.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/suggested_tors_for_the_2020_review_-_final1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/psc-meetings-2020-review-0>.



transition priorities and challenges; (b) the joint project on transitions of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the Development Coordination Office, which has improved cross-pillar collaboration in transition contexts; and (c) the Secretary-General's planning directive issued in 2019 for the development of consistent and coherent system-wide United Nations transition processes. The United Nations has also developed new approaches to supporting peacebuilding priorities in transition contexts, including through peacebuilding activities supported by peacekeeping operations, when mandated, in partnership with United Nations country teams and other actors, and the opening of a new Peacebuilding Fund window for transitions.<sup>3</sup> In Darfur, for example, in cooperation with the United Nations country team and international and national actors, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) supports State liaison functions in the areas of rule of law, human rights, livelihoods for displaced populations and immediate service delivery for internally displaced persons.

The Security Council has requested that transition processes be guided by nationally owned exit strategies, as well as broad peacebuilding plans, as was recently the case with the transitions of UNAMID and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau. The Peacebuilding Commission has provided advice to the Council and helped mobilize international support and resources around national peacebuilding priorities before, during and after transitions, as recently demonstrated in its support for the transitions of Liberia and Sierra Leone. For example, the Commission provided a platform to discuss United Nations country team capacities to support peacebuilding priorities in Liberia after the United Nations Mission in Liberia drawdown, contributing to the creation of the Liberia multi-partner trust fund to help support the transition. It has also supported more actively the engagement of women and youth in national efforts to build and sustain peace and has advocated for women and youth to meaningfully participate in peacebuilding efforts during transitions.

#### *Outstanding challenges*

In the absence of adequate and predictable funding, countries still face the risk of going over a "financing cliff" as funding for peacebuilding drops precisely at a moment when national authorities and communities assume increased responsibilities for security and peacebuilding. This could be further complicated if the peacebuilding-related activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, where mandated, are not adequately resourced. In many cases, improved coordination among all parts of the international community is still needed when supporting countries in transition. Often, macroeconomic risks, financial stability and development priorities are not properly considered when making security risk assessments.

Partnerships between national actors and international, regional and subregional organizations, bilateral donors and international financial institutions are not always strong enough to sustain political and financial support for national peacebuilding efforts. National and local actors, particularly women and youth, are not always engaged in a meaningful way in the development and advancement of national peacebuilding priorities. The readiness of national security institutions to take over the mission security responsibilities is not always properly taken into account. The drawdown of large peacekeeping missions often means the closure of field offices in

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<sup>3</sup> In 2019, 30 per cent of Peacebuilding Fund investments were in transition settings, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Liberia and the Sudan, contributing to continuity in addressing peacebuilding and development challenges.

vulnerable communities on the periphery, with most United Nations country team activities headquartered in capitals or large regional population centres. In times of transition, there is a risk that protection gaps and challenges faced by civilians may be further exacerbated.

### *Recommendations*

National ownership and leadership, bearing in mind the importance of ensuring that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account, should continue to be at the heart of all efforts aimed at supporting United Nations transitions. The international community should continue to focus on partnering with national and regional actors to strengthen national capacities and institutions. Joint analysis and planning and coherent implementation, with peacebuilding integrated in all stages of United Nations engagement in a country, are essential. Those efforts should be underpinned by a multi-stakeholder accountability framework that measures success in terms of impact rather than outputs. Partnerships with civil society, including women- and youth-led organizations, could assist in adequately measuring impact on the ground. Strengthening engagement with national authorities and local communities, as appropriate, particularly in border regions, can also help ensure that protection efforts are upheld during transitions.

The Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with its mandate, could help improve transitions, including by encouraging the generation of early, inclusive and comprehensive preparations for transition processes to set in place realistic conditions for durable peace and mitigate the risk of relapse. The Commission can provide space to harness the views of national and local authorities, countries involved in the provision of technical cooperation, civil society organizations, relevant parts of the United Nations system, including agencies, funds and programmes, regional organizations, international financial institutions and, where relevant, the private sector, and to reflect their analysis of priorities, challenges and risks in its advice to the Security Council, as appropriate. This is particularly relevant when the Council is in the early stages of formulating a mission's mandate. In pursuing this objective, the Commission will further explore good practices and guidance provided by countries and the United Nations system in relevant peacebuilding mandate areas. It will also promote the meaningful participation of women and youth in the context of transition processes. The Commission also stands ready to support the Council in considering the elements identified in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 21 December 2017 and 18 December 2018 ([S/PRST/2017/27](#) and [S/PRST/2018/20](#)) related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as the transition needs identified in Security Council thematic resolutions concerning a number of peacebuilding-related areas, such as rule of law and security sector reform, when reviewing the mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions and special political missions. In that regard, the Commission welcomes the intention of the Council to seek its advice during the formation, review and drawdown of mandates.

## **Participation of women in peacebuilding**

### *Areas of progress*

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the United Nations and Member States have adopted and strengthened policies and tools to ensure that women are included in all peace processes, and have reiterated their commitments through numerous statements and resolutions. Relevant United Nations entities operating in the field have committed to consulting with women's civil society organizations, as appropriate, to inform their analysis, planning, programming and implementation and reporting. The Peacebuilding Fund has also played an

important role: in 2019, 40 per cent of all Fund investments supported gender aspects of peacebuilding, a first for any United Nations fund. In countries where the Peacebuilding Commission has engaged, women-led organizations have been playing an increasingly important role in designing and implementing peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives. In Burundi, for example, a women's mediation network was created in 2015 with support from the Fund to help address tensions at the community level. In Guinea-Bissau, the Guinean Women's Council, also supported by the Fund, held two National Forums of Women and Girls for Peace, where women discussed pressing issues affecting peace consolidation in that country and demonstrated the capacity of local women to mobilize around and advocate for common peacebuilding goals.

The Peacebuilding Commission has committed to advancing the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding, including by supporting the leadership role of women in peacebuilding, engaging with women's peacebuilding organizations, holding dedicated meetings and working closely with regional and subregional organizations. The Commission's adoption of its gender strategy in 2016 represented a step forward in fostering greater attention to the gender dimension of peacebuilding, in guiding the Commission to a more regular engagement with women peacebuilders, particularly those from civil society organizations, and in strengthening the gender components of the Commission's advice to the Security Council.

#### *Outstanding challenges*

Women in certain country-specific contexts continue to face gender-based discrimination and structural barriers to equal opportunities for participation in decision-making and peacebuilding processes, including in conferences and meetings organized by the United Nations, and a substantial lack of funding for women's organizations. Furthermore, gender dimensions are often considered as an afterthought when they should be an integral part of conflict analysis and planning that feeds into peacebuilding strategies. Threats and violence targeting women impede the ability of women peacebuilders to carry out their work. It is important to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not reverse progress in gender equality, the empowerment of women and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

#### *Recommendations*

Structural change requires harnessing the experiences of women and girls from all strata of society, including the most marginalized, to break cycles of deeply entrenched gender stereotypes across societies and cultures, a shift from siloed implementation of policies related to women and peace and security, and the participation of youth in peacebuilding. Women should be an integral part of peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts at all levels of society, and initiatives that aim to enhance the role of women in political and socioeconomic processes and peacebuilding initiatives should be encouraged and supported. The crucial work of women peacebuilders at the national and local levels needs to be better supported through strategic partnerships and greater collaboration between the United Nations and civil society actors, as appropriate, and steps should be taken to facilitate a safe and enabling environment for the work of women peacebuilders. United Nations entities operating at the country level must deliver on their commitment to consult with women's civil society organizations to inform their analysis, planning, programming and implementation. There should also be more systematic monitoring from Member States of the implementation of their own national action plans on women and peace and security. Adequate funding for women-led peacebuilding organizations and networks is important. The Peacebuilding Fund Gender Promotion

Initiative should continue to advance the women and peace and security agenda through targeted support to women peacebuilders, and other stakeholders should follow through with their own commitments. Efforts to address the negative impacts of COVID-19 in peacebuilding should give due consideration to the protection of the rights of women and to the empowerment of women.

The Commission commits to enhancing implementation of its gender strategy, by more systematically including women and representatives of women's groups in its meetings and by streamlining the gender dimensions of peacebuilding in its country-specific and regional activities and in its analysis and advice to the General Assembly and the Security Council, in particular during the review of mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions, as appropriate. In implementation of its gender strategy, the Commission will also support the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large and end impunity regarding such violence. The Commission is currently exploring ways to foster a greater accountability for implementation of its gender strategy, including the use of gender-disaggregated data to track progress in its different peacebuilding areas. The Peacebuilding Support Office, together with United Nations country teams, should continue to explore ways to improve stocktaking of women peacebuilders' messages from the field, including by compiling and sharing good practices with Peacebuilding Commission Member States on a regular basis.

## **Institution building**

### *Areas of progress*

Institution-building covers a wide range of institutions, including security and judicial systems, as well as economic and social systems that enable the delivery of services at both the national and local levels. Successful institution-building at the national and local levels, within the framework of the rule of law, and strong institutions help to reduce vulnerability, protect and empower people and build trust. With Peacebuilding Fund support and based on national ownership, national and local stakeholders have contributed to the strengthening of national and local institutions, including United Nations support to national efforts to build effective and accountable security institutions in Burkina Faso and the Gambia. Such efforts played an important role in addressing conflicts, supporting political transition and promoting stability.

For its part, the Peacebuilding Commission has been strengthening its advisory, bridging and convening roles in support of nationally owned and led institution-building efforts in the countries under its consideration. The Commission has placed an emphasis on capacity-building and the exchange of good practices with concerned Governments and national authorities.

### *Outstanding challenges*

Persisting challenges to building resilient, inclusive and responsive institutions are being complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which poses considerable risks to hard-won peacebuilding gains around the world. The pandemic may undermine social cohesion, strain the capacity of governance institutions, increase risks of instability and exacerbate underlying tensions. The COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted the importance of long-term funding and technical support to strengthen public institutions. Support for institution-building must contribute to the implementation of the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated, indivisible and balanced manner. It is worth noting, for example, that

only 18 per cent of all conflict-affected countries are on track to meet the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals related to unmet basic needs.

Lack of coordination between different international partners in the field who work on capacity development for national and local institutions continues to be a problem. Within the United Nations, gaps remain between identifying political and programmatic objectives and the actual design, resourcing and implementation of context-specific programmes that could effectively respond to nationally identified priorities and goals and the outcomes of conflict analyses and needs assessments. This is further complicated by the fact that sustainable financing for peacebuilding remains a challenge over the long term, including in the area of institution-building.

### *Recommendations*

The multilateral system needs to come together to provide technical support to build stronger, resilient, inclusive and responsive institutions. This need has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires an effective global response to build back better. This is particularly important in conflict-affected contexts where State capacities are weak and often socioeconomic investments have not been prioritized. Where so mandated, peacekeeping and special political missions should be given the means to implement peacebuilding-related activities aimed at supporting the building of national and local institutions and capacities. Building national and local institutions for basic service delivery such as health care, education, water and sanitation; security, law enforcement and justice systems; effective and accountable rule of law and security institutions; and tax collection, are among the priorities for strengthening trust between the people and the State. The Peacebuilding Commission has a vital role to play in promoting a balance between responding to immediate challenges and ensuring that technical and financial support is available over the longer term.

Nationally owned institution-building efforts, when requested, require technical support from a diverse range of United Nations entities and other multilateral and bilateral partners with expertise and experience in the respective areas of institutions. Such external support needs to be coordinated and coherent to bring maximum results. It is important to continue investments in cross-border and regional programming, as well as programmes aimed at building and strengthening national and local institutions and human capacity development. The United Nations must continue to work to bridge the gap between policy objectives and programme design, which hinders coherent, impact-driven and sustained system-wide engagement in support of building national institutions. Through its advisory and bridging role and by leveraging its convening power to bring relevant actors onboard, the Peacebuilding Commission can foster a more balanced United Nations approach to supporting nationally owned institution-building efforts over the short, medium and long term, considering good practices and United Nations norms and policies in different peacebuilding areas. In the wake of related United Nations reform processes, more should be done to ensure that United Nations field presences are fully equipped with necessary expertise to help build stronger institutions in a coherent manner. The Commission could more systematically share best practices in institution-building.

## **System-wide support for peacebuilding and sustaining peace**

### *Areas of progress*

Progress has been made by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in aligning their country strategies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, the Peacebuilding Fund has fostered greater coherence and collaboration within the United Nations system, particularly in cross-border situations. There have also been efforts by United Nations entities to examine their contributions to peacebuilding and sustaining peace within their mandates, notably the elaboration by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of a new corporate framework to support sustainable peace in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Steps have also been taken by all concerned United Nations entities to strengthen field-driven joint and integrated peacebuilding analysis, including through an expanded cadre of peace and development advisers and regional specialists, which constitutes an important tool to institutionalize cross-cutting and joint peacebuilding approaches and strategies.

#### *Outstanding challenges*

It is too early to discern the impact of these United Nations reforms on the performance of United Nations country teams and the overall impact on efforts to build and sustain peace on the ground. Moreover, there do not seem to be metrics in place to track performance and impact at the country level or the extent to which the new common country assessment and cooperation frameworks are leveraging peacebuilding approaches.

Lack of predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding activities remains a challenge to more joined-up United Nations approaches in the field. While projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund now involve a broad range of United Nations entities in the field working jointly to address conflict risks, peacebuilding activities remain underfunded. More needs to be done to shift peacebuilding into the bloodstream of United Nations activities in the field.

#### *Recommendations*

Recognizing that an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and development actors, within and outside of the United Nations system, consistent with their respective mandates and the Charter, is critical to peacebuilding and sustaining peace and essential for improving respect for human rights, gender equality, empowering women and youth, strengthening the rule of law, eradicating poverty, building institutions and advancing economic development in conflict-affected countries, it is important to continue cross-pillar support to United Nations peacebuilding activities in the field while acknowledging that each pillar has its own intrinsic value and specific mandate. In this connection, the Peacebuilding Support Office has an important role to play in supporting effective interface among relevant United Nations entities. The role of United Nations resident coordinators, as well as a clear definition of responsibilities and coordination modalities between different United Nations field entities that are present in the same region, are indispensable. The forthcoming quadrennial comprehensive policy review that will guide United Nations operational activities for development into the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals offers another opportunity to continue strengthening United Nations cooperation and coordination, with due respect to mandates. The peacebuilding architecture could play a larger role in offering valuable insight into causes of conflict, including threats posed by hate speech and xenophobia, and possible ways to address them.

At the country level, more work is needed to join up United Nations efforts on the ground. The common country assessment process needs to be driven by shared strategic goals, rather than simply bringing disparate activities into a joint matrix. Going forward, it will be important to follow up on whether and how improved analysis and planning efforts have enhanced the system's ability to deliver on the ground. The Peacebuilding Commission could serve as a convener and platform for

such discussions. The Commission's strengthened bridging role with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, including through the designation of informal Peacebuilding Commission coordinators for each of these bodies, similar to the informal coordinator between the Security Council and the Commission, could help support these efforts.

## **Financing**

### *Areas of progress*

Various actors take part in the operational activities related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, drawing on diverse sources of funding, including bilateral donors, United Nations trust funds, international financial institutions, the private sector and donations. The objective should be maximization of the aggregate amount and efficiency in spending financial resources. The Peacebuilding Fund has proven to be an indispensable tool in support of enhanced United Nations efforts relating to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. With timely and risk-tolerant support for nationally led efforts to build and sustain peace, the Fund has consistently encouraged conflict-responsive, coherent and integrated United Nations assistance in the field. More recently, it has made timely adjustments while integrating the new risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic into its programming. The Fund has also piloted new approaches to explore innovative sources of funding. For example, a Fund project in Colombia is supporting seven private-sector investments in conflict-affected areas through blended finance mechanisms, including credits and guarantees. The Fund continues to explore non-conventional funding sources as a way to diversify funding sources and broaden partnerships.

The Peacebuilding Commission has continued to help mobilize resources for peacebuilding priorities in different contexts around the world. For example, following a meeting on Burkina Faso in March 2020, the Commission actively tracked bilateral and multilateral commitments in support of the Government's priority action plan (*matrice d'actions prioritaires*), with a cost estimate of \$202,783,684. More recently, the Commission adjusted its workplan to systematically examine the consequences of COVID-19 on peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries and how the multilateral system can help ensure conflict-sensitive responses to COVID-19.

### *Outstanding challenges*

Peacebuilding is currently underfunded; the financing of peacebuilding is unpredictable and lacks a sustained approach; and increased coordination is needed. Financing for peacebuilding activities remains insufficient and heavily dependent on a small group of traditional donors to provide voluntary and extrabudgetary funding. Broadening and diversifying the donor base is of utmost importance. Despite important contributions from several Member States, including some new partners and a growth in multi-year contributions, funding for peacebuilding activities remains limited, including contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund, which does not yet meet current demand and is far from reaching the goal of the Secretary-General of \$500 million per year. There are concerns that a global economic contraction owing to COVID-19 will further undermine efforts to mobilize funding for the Fund, even as demand for its support has outpaced supply. Member States could further collectively consider the proposals of the Secretary-General for ensuring predictable and sustained financing of United Nations peacebuilding activities, including further exploration of innovative financing. Lack of financing for peacebuilding could hamper efforts by conflict-affected countries to attain the Sustainable Development Goals.



Funding for women-led and youth-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly at the local and grass-roots level, is important, as the Peacebuilding Commission also flagged in its advice to the Security Council on women and peace and security in 2019 and on youth and peace and security in 2020.

### *Recommendations*

Member States should remain committed to ensuring adequate, predictable and sustained financing of peacebuilding efforts, and the donor base for peacebuilding should be broadened and diversified. It is also important to provide peacekeeping and special political missions with the necessary means for the critical peacebuilding-related activities that they conduct, where mandated. Assistance from international partners, as well as the private sector, where relevant, should be further encouraged. Increasing contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund remains a critical objective, while continuing to strengthen accountability and transparency, and Member States that have not contributed to the Fund could consider doing so. Member States need to further discuss the options formulated by the Secretary-General for ensuring predictable and sustained financing of United Nations peacebuilding activities. Innovative financing for the Fund, which could preserve its flexibility and nimbleness, should be further explored, including options for blended financing as a vehicle for mobilizing private capital. The United Nations is encouraged to further strengthen its efforts to communicate the impact, benefits and leveraging effects of financing for peacebuilding.

In pursuing adequate, predictable and sustained financing of peacebuilding efforts, Member States could examine additional options aimed at reducing fragmentation of the various funds to increase efficiency in the use of peacebuilding funds in the broader context, in cooperation with host Governments and international financial institutions, including the World Bank. Funding streams should be brought together in the spirit of “good peacebuilding donorship” in order to enhance coherence and coordination, and funding for peacebuilding activities could be more regularly tracked. Possibilities for coordination among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as various funds related to peacebuilding, should be further explored. Diversified international assistance can help mitigate the risk for otherwise reluctant commercial investors in conflict-affected contexts to mobilize new financing sources.

Funding to support the meaningful participation of civil society, particularly women-led and youth-led peacebuilding organizations, as appropriate, remains important, in accordance with national peacebuilding priorities.

## **Partnerships**

### *Areas of progress*

The pursuit of partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector has intensified in the past few years. Building on the joint statement of the Peacebuilding Commission and the World Bank in 2017, the United Nations and the World Bank have focused more strategically on support for field partnerships in conflict-affected countries, notably in Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. A joint United Nations-World Bank Group study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, was published in 2018, and in 2019 the World Bank took steps to institutionalize its peacebuilding engagement through its new strategy for fragility, conflict and violence. The Peacebuilding Fund has also helped to strengthen partnerships on the ground on the basis of shared data, analysis

and field collaboration. In response to the possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacebuilding, the Fund created a fast-track mechanism to support timely joint United Nations-World Bank risk analysis. Common effort is especially important in this regard.

The revitalization of the African Union post-conflict reconstruction and development policy is an important step towards effective continental ownership of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, while the joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the United Nations-African Union memorandum of understanding on peacebuilding support remain important tools for coordination and coherent United Nations support for the African Union. The fact that one of the key objectives of the new Peacebuilding Fund strategy for 2020–2024 is strengthening United Nations strategic cooperation with regional organizations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as appropriate, is a helpful development. In addition, trilateral cooperation between the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations and international financial institutions has proved to be particularly helpful, including in support of Burkina Faso, where, at the request of the Government, an effective partnership between the United Nations, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the European Union has been supporting nationally owned priorities in the regions most affected by insecurity. In the Gambia, an international advisory group was established with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund by the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to coordinate assistance for security sector reform. The Peacebuilding Commission has also supported strategic partnerships for peacebuilding, including through strengthened engagement with the World Bank and recent engagements with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Economic Community of Central African States, in addition to strengthening its existing engagement with the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union.

With regard to partnerships with civil society, the development by the United Nations of system-wide community engagement guidelines is a positive step that will help the organization to engage in a more systematic manner with local peacebuilding organizations, in coordination with national authorities, which are essential actors for successful peacebuilding processes.

#### *Outstanding challenges*

There is room to further strengthen strategic and operational partnerships between the United Nations and national authorities with a view to increasing support for national peacebuilding efforts, including at the local level. While there is broad recognition that the most effective partnerships are those established locally with national peacebuilders, there is a gap between rhetoric and practice. It is important for the United Nations system and its partners to prioritize national ownership and the development of national and local capacity in conflict-affected countries.

While the United Nations and the World Bank continue to operationalize their 2017 partnership, joint programming and peacebuilding assessments should adhere to nationally defined peacebuilding and development priorities, as well as to commitments and terminology agreed upon by Member States at multilateral discussions.

#### *Recommendations*

Partnerships between national stakeholders, the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, civil

society and the private sector, where relevant, should be further strengthened to advance complementarity and coherence among various international, regional, national and local actors in support of nationally identified peacebuilding priorities. It is important to identify practical ways to advance synergies and complementarities between different financial mechanisms of the United Nations and the African Union and to translate the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhancing Partnership on Peace and Security into joint, coordinated and coherent actions. In this regard, it is important to enhance coordination between United Nations entities and the African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, which is recognized by the African Union policy organs as a primary instrument in support of national ownership of peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts on the continent. There is also a need to strengthen collaboration between the United Nations and AfDB, with a view to fast-tracking the development and peacebuilding priorities of Africa. The Peacebuilding Commission will help to pursue these objectives by leveraging its bridging and convening roles.

There is a need to look into ways of meaningfully integrating recommendations and action points contained in existing regional and subregional frameworks and initiatives in matters pertaining to peacebuilding in order to avoid duplication of work and reinforce national ownership and coherence of action, bearing in mind each country-specific context. Incorporating regional perspectives, as appropriate, reflecting regional diversity and ensuring regional balance in the work of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture are critically important. There is room to continue exploring South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The involvement of private sector and development institutions, where relevant, as partners in building and sustaining peace is also important. Beyond considering the private sector as a source of funding for peacebuilding, the private sector could also be seen as a partner in conflict-affected countries, one that can support entrepreneurial action in communities and lead to a common vision of society.

There is room to further strengthen strategic and operational partnerships between the United Nations and regional and national stakeholders, with a view to increasing support for peacebuilding efforts at the national and local levels, including the meaningful participation of women- and youth-led organizations. The Peacebuilding Fund could prioritize innovative and targeted projects to encourage community resilience and social cohesion, including against domestic violence, gender-based violence, hate speech and xenophobia.

I kindly ask you to circulate the present letter to the members of the General Assembly and the Security Council and to issue it as a document of the Assembly and of the Council.

(Signed) Marc-André **Blanchard**  
Chair  
Peacebuilding Commission