

12 PBC Annual Session

23 June 2016

Concept paper and programme

Transitions as a challenge to consolidating peace and security: The role of the PBC in diplomacy and political accompaniment

The Report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the 2015 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture¹ focuses on the importance of improving the timing and management of transitions between different kinds of UN engagements in order to safeguard sustainable peace. As the AGE report noted, “the continuity of United Nations engagement in sustaining peace is challenged by the proliferation of operational formats, ranging from mediation teams in the peacemaking phase [...] to large peacekeeping operations, through smaller follow-on special political missions to regular engagement by resident coordinators heading United Nations Country Teams. The transitions between those arrangements are frequently poorly timed and poorly managed, further impairing continuity”.

There are various kinds of transitions. They can refer to a transition from a UN Country Team-setting to a Security Council mandated mission, whether focused on peacemaking and mediation, peacekeeping or peacebuilding; a transition from a peacekeeping operation to a politically or peacebuilding-oriented mission mandated by the Security Council (as e.g. in Sierra Leone); a transition from a peacekeeping to a Country Team setting (as e.g. currently in Liberia) or from a political or peacebuilding mission to a Country Team setting (as e.g. in Sierra Leone in 2014); or countries might go through a political transition with only a Country Team presence, at times benefitting from the support from a regional political office mandated by the Security Council (as e.g. the case in Guinea, supported by the UN Office in West Africa). The Annual Session will concentrate on these kinds of transitions, acknowledging that the drawdown of a Security Council-mandated mission is among the most salient moments in a country’s political transition process, requiring support from the international community, including from the PBC,²

¹ A/69/968-S/2015/490

² Other kinds of transitions, for example, from a humanitarian crisis triggered by a natural disaster to a development situation or from one economic system to another are beyond the relevance for the Annual Session.

In June 2014, at its first Annual Session³, the Peacebuilding Commission referred to the drawdown and withdrawal of Security Council-mandated missions as representing a natural evolution in a country's transition from conflict to sustainable peace. At the same time, transitions pose important challenges to national institutions in conflict affected countries. Member States noted that the drawdown of a mission was a key policy concern for the orderly exit of peacekeepers and referred to the need for closer collaboration among the Security Council, the PBC and key UN partners to ensure smooth transitions and avoid relapse into violence and conflict. In 2014, PBC's Working Group on Lessons Learned also addressed the issue of transition and it compiled the final report⁴ which pointed out major challenges such as funding and technical gaps and sustaining inclusive political processes and suggested appropriate modalities of PBC engagement after a mission withdrawal.

The Annual Session of 2016 will offer a platform to discuss ways to address the challenges of countries in transition contexts, improve policy and operational practices to ensure the continuity of peacebuilding processes and prevent the lapse or relapse into conflict. It will specifically look at ways in which the PBC can support countries undergoing transitions.

Two interactive working sessions will address specific aspects of the main theme and will be organized around the two sub-themes detailed below. The sessions will bring together Member States, key multilateral and regional institutions, relevant UN operational entities, as well as experts.

Sub-theme 1: Countries undergoing transitions: key challenges

Countries in transition from violent conflict to sustainable peace face several challenges. International support and attention can be important factors for inclusive political dialogue, implementation of peace agreement, reaching political agreements around reforms, national reconciliation and rule of law. The drawdown of peacekeeping missions can also lead to reduced support for the security and justice sectors, putting pressure on national capacities, particularly in countries where institutions are weak and the support of the international community is a key requirement to rebuild, or strengthen, national capacities and institutions. The drawdown of a mission can also be economically destabilizing, especially where the UN had a large footprint.

With these challenges in mind, the Advisory Group of Experts argues against "abrupt" transitions, and stresses the need for ensuring "continuity in leadership and personnel across different UN engagements, and providing the UN – including the Country Teams – with the resources necessary to carry out their mandates" including in critical areas of strengthening of political, security and justice institutions. Beyond the operational level, in the long run, "overcoming economic grievances, offering populations the means to earn livelihoods, and creating the foundations for poverty eradication and inclusive, broad-based economic growth" are integral to any transition from conflict to normalcy.

Looking at different types of transition – from peacemaking and mediation missions to peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and to Special Political Missions (SPMs); from peacekeeping operations to United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs); and from UNCTs to PKOs – this session will focus on the experiences and challenges of countries transitioning to durable peace, with an emphasis on the peacebuilding priorities which, if properly addressed, can contribute to avoiding a relapse into

³ <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/140710%20PBC%20Annual%20Session%20Chair's%20summary-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/wgll/141212%20WGLL%20Final%20Report.pdf>

conflict. The discussion may address aspects related to the socio-economic, justice, political or security situations in the countries and it will benefit from the perspectives of countries concerned, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions (IFIs), relevant UN entities and representatives of civil society.

Sub-theme 2: What role for the PBC in accompanying countries undergoing different types of transitions

In view of the challenges faced by countries in transition from conflict to sustaining peace, it is clear that the international community can play a crucial role in supporting and advising national authorities achieve nationally identified priorities. In 2005, Member States decided to create the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund to close what the Secretary-General had identified as a “gaping hole” in the UN’s capacity to support countries achieve lasting peace.

As a body to provide advice upon request to both the General Assembly and the Security Council, and through its diverse membership, the PBC can play a critical role. This has been reaffirmed by the substantively identical resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016) which articulates the key functions expected of the PBC: Firstly, it can provide political accompaniment and advocacy for countries concerned at a time when the attention of the international community is of the utmost importance, to marshal resources. Secondly, it can bridge policy and operational gaps among the principal organs and entities of the UN, and promote interlinkages and coherence among the peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian actors with a view to sustaining peace during and after transitions. Thirdly, the Commission is a unique platform that can convene all relevant stakeholders, including national authorities, regional and sub-regional organizations, the IFIs, UN actors and civil society organizations to discuss peacebuilding priorities.

The session will focus on concrete ways how this potential of the PBC should be used in order to ensure smooth and orderly transitions. It will discuss the advisory role of the Commission to the Security Council, particularly related to Council-mandated missions. It will assess the complementary role of PBC to SPMs and PKOs, and it will look at how the Commission can build stronger partnerships with key regional partners to better support the needs of countries in transition.

In this connection, and building on the discussions convened by the PBC on peacebuilding challenges at the regional and sub-regional level, the session, in consultation with the countries concerned, will also take a look at the idea of establishment of a sub-regional operational framework that would facilitate greater coherence between programmatic and political objectives of the UN and other actors’ engagements, in order to ensure synergies between the socio-economic, peace and security dimensions of their engagement in countries experiencing transition.

Format:

Opening and closing sessions

Will be held in plenary and will be designed around opening remarks by invited dignitaries and a keynote address by an international figure. The keynote address should help frame the thinking around various aspects of the overarching theme and areas for improved policy approaches and coordination.

The closing session will be addressed by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Interactive working sessions on sub-themes

The interactive working sessions will take place in between the opening and closing sessions. They will bring together Member States (including Chairs of CSCs and countries on the agenda), relevant UN officials, representatives of institutional partners (IFIs, etc.), regional and local actors, relevant experts (practitioners/academia) and civil society organizations.

Each interactive working session will be initiated by two short presentations by invited lead speakers addressing the questions suggested for discussion. At least one presentation should draw, to the extent possible, on specific country example(s). The presentations will be followed by an interactive discussion with invited participants. Each working session will have a designated moderator and, possibly, designated respondents from the floor.

Structure/Programme:

Opening session

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.: Opening remarks by the PBC Chair, SG + Address by a Keynote-speaker

Interactive working session (1)

11:00 a.m. – 01:00 p.m.: Countries undergoing transitions: key challenges

Interactive working session (2)

03:00 – 05:00 p.m.: What role for the PBC in accompanying countries undergoing different types of transitions

Closing session

05:00 – 06:00 p.m.: Closing remarks by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council
Concluding remarks by the PBC Chair

Outcome:

As set out in the agreed modalities, the principles, conclusions and recommendations of the annual session will be considered and agreed by the OC and reflected in the PBC's annual report. The Chair will submit an informal Chair's report of the discussions which will be the basis of the OC deliberations.

Specifically, the outcome of the Annual Session should provide concrete recommendations for the PBC for action. Such recommendation could also include examples of successful peacebuilding elements.