

Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission

17 December 2019

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

1. On 17 December 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Chair H.E. Mr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto, convened a meeting of the PBC with the following agenda: 1) the informal adoption of the PBC annual report; 2) briefing on the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund; and 3) quarterly briefings by the Chairs of the PBC country configurations.

Informal adoption of the PBC report on its thirteenth session

2. The Chair presented the PBC report on its thirteenth session for informal adoption by the Commission. He thanked all Member States for their constructive engagement during the negotiation of the report and noted that it represented a good reflection of the PBC's work during the year. He informed that the report would be submitted for translation and presented for formal adoption at the meeting of the PBC scheduled for 29 January 2020.

The report was informally adopted.

3. Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), recalled the achievements of the Commission under the chairmanship of Colombia in 2019, including the launch of the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture; the engagement with ten countries as well as strengthened regional approaches; the collaboration with regional organizations and international financial institutions; thematic discussions on south-south cooperation, women, youth, and transhumance; the implementation of the Commission's gender strategy; and the deepened advisory role of the Commission to the Security Council. She noted the good progress toward strengthening synergies between the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), including by facilitating a briefing by the Chair and Vice-Chairs to the PBF Advisory Group. The PBF had benefited from suggestions and ideas from Member States, such as in the case of PBF projects in the Central African Republic, Burundi, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso. She emphasized that more can be done to reinforce linkages between the PBF and the PBC, such as dedicating an annual PBC meeting to discussions on the PBF, facilitating country-specific discussions when PBF eligibility is under consideration, and organizing joint PBC-PBF visits to relevant countries.

Briefing on activities of the Peacebuilding Fund

4. Mr. Marc-Andre Franche, Chief of PBSO's Financing for Peacebuilding branch, thanked partners and underlined how their investments helped "developmentalize" security issues by working closely with governments and development partners to invest in peacebuilding. He noted that 2019 is a record year with the highest amount of contributions that the PBF received since its inception. The fund had approved USD 190 million for projects in 2019 with 164 projects in 41 countries, among which there is a new Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative including support to 16 Civil Society Organizations in 20 countries. While noting that it was a record year for contributions to the PBF, the demand for PBF

support has outpaced the amount of funding received. Because of this, the Fund had to deny or delay support to Sudan, Haiti and Guinea. Another challenge is the process of adapting to the new merged DPPA system, which requires the experience of the Fund to feed into strategic planning processes. He introduced the PBF's new investment plan for 2020-2024, which will deepen its priority windows for cross-border projects, women and youth empowerment, and supporting transitions. The plan will also attend to emerging needs in regard to climate security, confronting hate speech, and greater support to the Resident Coordinator system and UN Country Teams.

5. Following the informal adoption of the annual report and the briefing on PBF, Member States took the floor to congratulate the Chair and commended the report to adequately reflect the work of the PBC during the last twelve months. They reassured their commitment to support the Commission, and made the following observations:
 - They welcomed the strengthened role of the Commission, especially the advisory role to the Security Council that had been well reflected in several mandate renewals. In this regard, some Member States encouraged proactive PBC discussions ahead of related Security Council meetings.
 - They emphasized the importance of regional approaches and deeper cooperation with regional organizations.
 - They highlighted that national ownership remains the guiding principle for peacebuilding processes and that international support should be aligned with the priorities of the host country.
 - Some Member States encouraged the Commission to convene more thematic debates, for example on the Women, Peace and Security and the Youth, Peace, and Security agendas as well as on cross-pillar approaches. Some also encouraged greater participation of civil society organisations in PBC meetings. One delegation also suggested discussing how to better communicate the work of the Commission.
 - They commended the work and catalytic role of the PBF, and the benefits it brings on the ground, and stressed the need to expand the donor base.
 - They welcomed the new investment plan of the PBF and expressed concerns over the existing funding gap.

Quarterly briefings by the PBC Country Configuration Chairs

6. The Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration (Brazil) underscored that the completion of the electoral cycle, which comprises the successful legislative elections in March as well as the first round of the presidential election held on 24 November and the second round scheduled for 29 December, is vital to the country's stabilization. He recalled his visit to Guinea-Bissau between 20 and 22 October, and underlined the importance of international support to contribute to the country's social and economic development. He commended international partners, especially ECOWAS, for their valuable work to ensure the holding of the elections. He brought Member States' attention to financing issues, since the financial gap for the election runoff is USD 1.5 million. Looking ahead, the conclusion of the electoral cycle will allow the country and the international community to focus on peacebuilding activities such as constitutional reform, strengthening local institutions, promoting reconciliation, as well as women and youth empowerment in the political arena.

7. The Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration (Canada) informed the Commission about the decision of the Sierra Leone Government to exit from the Commission's formal agenda, which was clearly conveyed during the Commission's visit to the Mano River Union (MRU) region in November. The decision to exit showcases the remarkable resilience and determination of the people and the government of Sierra Leone and is an example of successful engagement of the Commission. He commended the progress made on the ground, including the launch of the mid-term national plan focusing on national capacity, development and equality for all. He called on the Commission to continue its support to Sierra Leone and the entire region, with close collaboration with UNOWAS based on a regional approach. The last configuration meeting on Sierra Leone is scheduled at the beginning of 2020.
8. The Chair of the Central African Republic (Morocco) recalled the preparation process of the written observations from the Commission to the Security Council regarding the mandate renewal of MINUSCA. All recommendations in the observations, such as extending the mandate to the end of elections, continuing support to the political process focusing on humanitarian needs and strengthening the rule of law in the country, had been duly noted by the Council. The Chair also addressed the PBC-AUPSC annual dialogue held in November and stressed the need for the AUPSC to continue its presence in CAR, particularly considering the political accord that the AU guaranteed. The configuration is planning another visit to the country and would like to invite other Member States to join the mission.
9. The Chair of the Liberia Configuration (Sweden) welcomed the efforts of MRU towards regional cooperation, including the launch of the MRU Group in the UN. Given that Liberia is still facing fragility, international support is needed to support the country's efforts to build sustainable peace and development. She underlined the importance of international financial institutions to align their efforts with the country's peacebuilding agenda. In this regard, the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy and the IMF's four-year agreement for Liberia are welcomed for the country to stabilize the economy, lay the foundation for sustainable growth and strengthen governance. She assured that the configuration would continue to provide political guidance and support for the peacebuilding priorities of Liberia.
10. The Chair of the Burundi Configuration (Switzerland) noted the focus of the configuration on the social and economic realm in particular and its support to the country's National Development Plan for 2018-2027. He noted that it is crucial to avoid a slowdown of the economic programmes ahead of the 2020 elections. He raised the issue of returning Burundi refugees from neighboring countries, which requires adequate funding. The configuration is planning to visit Burundi in the first week of February 2020, and a configuration meeting is scheduled for 27 January 2020 before the visit. The meeting will discuss the priorities of the visit, including the possibility for the Commission to accompany Burundi on the path to peaceful elections and in the continuation of the economic dialogue with international partners. The configuration would continue inviting the government to provide updates on political, social and economic development in the country.
11. The Chair adjourned the meeting.