

**Peacebuilding Commission Virtual Consultation on the  
2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture:**

***“Institution Building and System-Wide Engagement for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”***

**22 May to 2 June 2020**

**Chair’s Summary**

1. From 22 May to 2 June 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an electronic consultation on institution building and system-wide engagement for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The consultation was chaired by H.E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard, Chair of the PBC. The objective of the consultation was to inform the formal phase of the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture and provide input for the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the 2020 review, the consultation was open to all UN Member States. Due to restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultation was convened in a virtual format with briefings and statements uploaded to a dedicated webpage.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair informed the Commission that the consultation focused on two important yet distinct topics at the heart of the 2016 twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace: i) marshalling international support to help countries build effective, accountable, inclusive and responsive institutions, and ii) ensuring that all three pillars of the UN system work together in an integrated and coherent manner to prevent conflict and sustain peace. He emphasized that the consultation offered an important opportunity to reflect on the status of implementation of the UN reforms designed to strengthen the work of the entire system in preventing conflict, sustaining peace and helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and examine whether and to what extent they had resulted in better cross-pillar coherence and coordination in analysis, planning, programme delivery and – most importantly – tangible impact on the ground. The Chair stressed that every part of the UN system would need to come together for an effective global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for building back better, recognizing that it was more important than ever in light of the pandemic to ensure that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts.
3. Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), underscored the timeliness of the consultation as the COVID-19 pandemic represented the greatest test for the UN since its formation. He highlighted the overwhelming socioeconomic challenges caused by the pandemic and noted with concern that human development was expected to decline in 2020 for the first time since 1990. He underlined that the pandemic was also a threat to international peace and security and risked exacerbating already existing grievances and inequalities,

affecting especially the most vulnerable in conflict-affected areas. The Administrator stressed that the UN needed to stay ahead of the curve and outlined three calls to action in this regard: i) the inconsistent investments in Sustainable Development Goal 16 must be addressed as millions of people continued to live in exclusion, which undermined public service delivery and economic development, while highlighting that the pandemic offered an opportunity to build stronger institutions by supporting crisis management capacity; ii) the UN must work in a close and coherent manner on the ground in the wake of several reform processes, ensuring that centrally driven policy and programmatic activities trickle down to joint action at country level; and iii) reliable funding and financing must be made available to strengthen public institutions, especially for countries undergoing transitions or post-conflict peacebuilding, noting that only 18% of all fragile or conflict-affected countries were on track to meet Sustainable Development Goal targets related to unmet basic needs. He commended the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G20 for suspending debt service payments for 76 countries for one year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and informed that the UN was urging all partners to introduce a debt moratorium for two years for all vulnerable countries. In addition, he highlighted that UNDP was delivering peace dividends alongside other UN agencies as the single largest implementing partner to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in nearly 40 countries. He confirmed the commitment of UNDP to serve as a key development actor in complex recovery and peacebuilding settings and as the UN technical lead for the socioeconomic recovery of countries across the globe during the crisis.

4. Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), emphasized the interdependence between health and peace, recognizing that while peace was a precondition for a healthy society, health could also be a bridge towards peace by delivering services equitably. He underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic had underscored the centrality of health across the globe and stressed that equitable health services strengthened community trust, which in turn contributed to strengthening health systems and peacebuilding efforts. The Director General especially highlighted the WHO Health and Peace initiative, which aimed at implementing health programs that also delivered peace dividends in conflict-affected areas, as well as the WHO's work in universal health coverage that helped build social cohesion. In conclusion, he reiterated the commitment of the WHO to continue working for peace through health and for health through peace.
5. Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), stressed that building peace and preventing conflict was critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the responsibility of the whole UN family, as well as other partners at different levels working across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, emphasizing that peace was everybody's business. He underscored that conflict and hunger were closely connected, which had been recognized in UNSCR 2417, and highlighted that the Global Report on Food Crisis 2020 had reported that conflict was the most important driver pushing people into acute hunger.

He further underlined that the FAO was making substantial contributions to sustaining peace by reducing hunger, supporting vibrant rural economies, supporting inclusive local institutions and sustaining people's livelihoods and making them more resilient by helping people better manage resources such as land and water. The Director General underscored that efforts for building and sustaining peace were critical for the fulfillment of the FAO's mission and especially highlighted the support received from the PBF that had helped the FAO work more effectively in this area, notably on cross-border pastoralism and natural resource management. He concluded by stressing that the FAO was an important pillar in the UN family's efforts for a more integrated system-wide approach to advance the peace agenda.

6. Dr. Jennifer Widner, Director, Innovations for Successful Societies, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, shared insights from academia on transitioning from conflict to inclusive institutions that could meet basic needs, while noting that no grand theory existed. She highlighted the need for high-level and constitutional considerations, including on semi-presidential systems, centralization and transitioning from technocratic caretakers to unity governments and to peaceful party competition. In this regard, she highlighted that the UN could have a role to play in facilitating trust-building among political factions to enable coordination around norms on peaceful competition. She proposed that election conflict mediation activities undertaken by the UN at the local level in several parts of Africa could be adapted and exported to other contexts. She further stressed the importance of delivering services to the most vulnerable and highlighted the value of the UN's extensive experience in this area. In addition, she underscored the need for a joint vision in fragile contexts on steps towards peacebuilding and suggested that the UN could be well-placed to help shape and facilitate coordination around such a vision.
7. Mr. Jake Sherman, Director, Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations, International Peace Institute (IPI), focused on coherence at country level based on case study research by IPI examining UN efforts in Burkina Faso, Liberia and Papua New Guinea. At the strategic level, challenges included different perceptions and methodologies for assessing risks within UN country teams; moving beyond joint planning to joint programming, within UN country teams as well as with partners; moving from surge staffing to longer-term staffing solutions; and strengthening engagement with and promoting the work of local governments and civil society organizations. He underscored that the restructuring of Resident Coordinators' Offices had been central in the operationalization of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace with their leading role in ensuring policy coherence across UN country teams based on UN Cooperation Frameworks, which were underpinned by Common Country Analyses that in all three studied countries aligned peacebuilding efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals. He stressed the importance of adequate staffing and highlighted in this context Peace and Development Advisers and thematic advisers as valuable resources in Resident Coordinators' Offices. Furthermore, he underlined the critical role of UN regional political offices in enhancing policy

coherence, including by undertaking analysis on cross-border issues, providing advice to UN country teams and convening regional stakeholders. The Director stressed the importance of the growing partnership between the UN and International Financial Institutions to support governments in the development, implementation and funding of national development plans, and highlighted that the private sector offered an innovative avenue for UN partnerships. Looking ahead, he emphasized that for the vision of sustaining peace to be fully realized, the operationalization must increasingly focus on the impact of efforts.

8. Ms. Izumi Ohno, Director of Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic had reinforced the importance of three issues that were highly relevant to international efforts towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace: i) the need for a multi-sectoral and coordinated approach; ii) the need for building institutions that provided essential public services, including the health systems; and iii) the need for prevention and resilience. She underscored the importance of building accountable and inclusive systems that could deliver public services, with due attention to the political sensitivities involved in governance, for sustaining peace. She informed that JICA's research showed that institution building at central and local level was key for making the peace-development nexus operational, and particularly highlighted local service delivery systems as a good way of localizing the peace-development nexus through empowerment of people, enhancing legitimacy of local governments and consequently building trust among those concerned. In conclusion, she stressed the need for a coherent strategy as well as integrated planning and implementation on the ground, and reiterated in this context the importance of coordination of UN and World Bank peacebuilding efforts, building on their respective comparative advantages and mandates.
9. Twenty-seven Member States submitted written statements welcoming the briefings and making the following observations:
  - They commended the UN reforms that had already generated results towards more coherent, impact-driven and sustained system-wide engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. They recalled the Secretary-General's emphasis on cross-pillar approaches and system-wide efforts in his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and asked for a critical update on concrete progress made and challenges remaining in delivering on those commitments in the context of the review.
  - They underscored the need to better understand the impact of UN reform efforts on the performance of the UN system at country level and its contribution to supporting national peacebuilding priorities.

- They agreed that strengthening national ownership through building national and local institutions and capacities was a central principle around which all other peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts revolved. Inclusive, accountable, effective and democratic institutions were central in promoting sustainable development and Agenda 2030.
- They recognized that a system-wide approach was needed to effectively support institution building, as each institution rarely fell under the mandate of one single UN entity but benefited from contributions and expertise from multiple agencies, funds and programmes. They suggested to better mainstream institution building throughout PBC work, including in its thematic strategies.
- They underscored the need for joint context-specific analysis of conflict drivers and risks and shared strategic goals within the UN as well as with partners and welcomed the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses, and highlighted the value of implementing these frameworks in cooperation with partners. They welcomed the contributions of the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention in this regard, particularly through the deployment of UN Peace and Development Advisors. They especially called for further alignment of capacities, tools and resources with the World Bank and its Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (2020-2025).
- Some Member States called for strengthening consideration of climate change and climate-related security risks in UN joint analysis, risk assessment, and strategic planning efforts.
- They called for promoting leadership skills throughout the UN system for driving peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including for Resident Coordinators in their political leadership role.
- They underlined the centrality of the PBC's convening role in promoting an integrated whole-of-system approach and bridging the three pillars of the UN. They welcomed the strengthened advisory role of the PBC to the Security Council, particularly in relation to transitions, and called for further structuring this dialogue, including by ensuring that it was systematically informed by Resident Coordinators and Peace and Development Advisors in the field.
- They stressed the importance of further institutionalizing the partnerships between the PBC and regional and sub-regional organizations, including for developing an interlocking global peacebuilding architecture. Furthermore, they underscored that

regional and sub-regional organisations often constituted key entry points for engaging with local, national and regional actors for peace. They emphasized that the PBC should facilitate dialogue with all segments of society and that its network of partners must be widened to ensure the meaningful participation of civil society and local actors.

- They recognized the PBF as the most agile and rapid tool for peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the UN's disposal and urged for stronger alignment between priorities addressed in the PBC and the projects financed by the PBF to enhance consistency between political aims and actions on the ground.
- They recognized the significance of predictable, adequate and sustainable financing to enable a fully integrated system-wide approach to deliver on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and underscored the need to demonstrate good peacebuilding donorship in this regard.
- They emphasized the importance of fostering synergies between peacebuilding and peacekeeping and stressed the need to ensure that peacekeeping missions were well-equipped to serve peacebuilding and sustaining peace objectives during the entire life cycle of an operation, including for assisting in building and strengthening local and national institutions.
- They highlighted the COVID-19 pandemic as a game changer and a stress-test for the peacebuilding architecture that risked exacerbating existing drivers of conflict and generating new tensions. They further noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had shed light on the need to support state capacities in fragile countries to deliver quality public services to all – including health care – and underscored the role of the PBC in accompanying countries in strengthening institutions when building back better and sharing best practices.
- They underlined the need for an inclusive approach in identifying national priorities and highlighted the role of the UN and other partners in supporting nationally and locally led processes aimed at facilitating dialogue among national and local stakeholders, with a special focus on women and youth.
- Several member states called on the UN to make use of the full potential of its human rights instruments in its activities throughout the system and encouraged the peacebuilding architecture to make further progress on the inclusion of human rights mechanisms to facilitate better early warning capacities, information and knowledge

sharing as well as joint analysis of causes of conflicts and possible ways to address them.