

**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on the impact of
COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace**

**8 April 2020
Chair's Summary**

1. On 8 April, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The meeting was held on a virtual platform and chaired by H.E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard, Chair of the PBC. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the impact of the pandemic on countries and regions where the PBC has engaged, and identify priorities for mitigating the potential destabilizing impact of the crisis on countries affected by conflict.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic was a multi-faceted crisis that required people-centered responses as well as global solidarity. He stressed the need to work together to limit the spread and manage socio-economic shocks. The Chair underlined that the PBC had an important role to play in continuing to accompany the countries and regions on its agenda while swiftly adjusting to their immediate peacebuilding needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. He expressed his hope that the meeting would set the stage for country- and region-specific PBC meetings on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
3. H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General, stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic was a human crisis with far reaching implications that cut across all aspects of human life with the risk of reversing hard-won development gains. She stressed that now was the time to renew commitments to predictable financing and strong partnerships, including with the World Bank, for sustainable development, human rights, humanitarian action and peacebuilding. She reiterated the Secretary-General's statement on the need to confront the pandemic and its consequences simultaneously, especially in those countries and regions where conflict continued to rage. The DSG underscored that the pandemic threatened to further exacerbate conflicts and political tensions, while noting that conflicts also were a major bottleneck to any effective response. On 31 March, the Secretary-General had launched a global call for solidarity to help countries suppress the transmission of the virus, while mitigating the devastating socio-economic impact. Following this call, the UN development system was finalizing a global framework to foster an integrated and agile response by UN country teams, which would leverage the global footprint of the UN system. The DSG noted that this framework would also help orient the investments of the COVID-19 fund that the Secretary-General was creating to ensure that UN country teams have flexible resources for joint response. She counted on support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and underlined that more needed to be done to keep a focus on the human face of the crisis and to

prevent the reversal of peace and security gains. The DSG emphasized that the PBC was uniquely positioned to promote a coherent and inclusive global response that was anchored in human rights, strong institutions, social cohesion, greater equity and justice. In conclusion, she asked the Commission to contribute to promoting a consistent narrative in response to the Secretary-General's call for global solidarity.

4. Mr. Dominique Burgeon, Director of Emergencies, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), updated the Commission on the extent of global food insecurity, which risked being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A reported 113 million people experienced food insecurity in 2019, of which two thirds were living in conflict-affected settings. In West Africa and the Sahel, the number of people experiencing food insecurity is now expected to increase by 500 000 people. He underscored that conflict was a major driver of food insecurity and that reduced access to food also risked leading to increased instability and conflict. The Director highlighted that the FAO's COVID-19 response included a community approach and focused on securing access to food by protecting food value chains, stabilizing income and ensuring access to social safety nets. The FAO was working with partners to strengthen data analysis to better target the response and reach those in most need of assistance. He highlighted the cooperation with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to increase social cohesion, secure livelihoods and raise awareness, which could be scaled up and expanded to new contexts. He underlined the need to invest in local actors, including women, to keep operations running during the complex crisis that was likely to have long-lasting impact. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of strengthening coordination across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus to effectively respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Mr. Franck Bousquet, Senior Director, Fragility, Conflict, & Violence, World Bank, underscored that the diverse challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic required a coordinated global response. He informed the Commission that the World Bank had taken quick action with focus on fast delivery. The World Bank had set up a fast track facility for COVID-19 response and had approved a package of 160 billion USD to be disbursed over the next 15 months. Using the fast track process, 1.9 billion USD to assist 25 countries had been approved so far, and he advised that 14 million USD would soon be approved for Burkina Faso. The Senior Director underlined that the partnership with the UN would be critical in responding to the crisis and stressed the importance of joint needs assessments in order to adapt response to conflict dynamics. He emphasized the need to focus on protecting the most vulnerable, especially in fragile settings that were likely to be hit hardest by the unfolding pandemic. He informed the Commission that the World Bank was discussing the possibility of suspending debt payments for fragile countries with the International Monetary Fund.¹ He recalled the World Bank Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence (2020-2025) and expressed concern over the

¹ On 13 April, the International Monetary Fund announced immediate debt service relief for 25 countries.

possibility of fragility in new countries, where fragile social contracts, health care deficits and socio-economic pressures could lead to violence.

6. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They reiterated the Secretary General’s call for global solidarity and stressed the need to act quickly to address immediate health and humanitarian needs while also mitigating the potentially catastrophic socio-economic impact of the pandemic in fragile, conflict-affected settings.
- They praised the Secretary-General’s timely call for an immediate global ceasefire and committed to stepping up efforts to promote and maintain peace gains in the countries and regions under the consideration of the PBC, with some Member States also stressing the importance of taking into full consideration human rights and gender dimensions in efforts to build back better.
- They emphasized the importance of working across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus in support of the Secretary-General’s recovery and response plan, and confirmed their readiness to lend full support to the UN in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- They underlined the need for a cross-pillar approach in support of all dimensions of peacebuilding, including promoting social cohesion, strengthening resilience, addressing inequalities, building institutions and ensuring basic services for all. They highlighted the importance of preventative action, while stressing the need for short-, medium- and long-term approaches.
- They emphasized the importance of utilizing the convening, bridging and advisory role of the PBC, including to the Security Council, to help bring Member States together with the UN system and other partners, including International Financial Institutions, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society, to mobilize resources, share lessons learned and advocate for coherent, coordinated responses to the pandemic. They noted that the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture offered a timely opportunity for adaptation.
- They called for a stronger UN-World Bank partnership in delivering joined-up, conflict-sensitive responses to the pandemic in partnership with host governments and affected communities.

- They agreed that the Commission should continue serving as an intergovernmental solidarity platform. They recognized the important role of the PBF in responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
7. In his closing remarks, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, thanked the Chair for his leadership on this topic and noted that this was one of the most important meetings ever convened by the PBC. He emphasized that the UN had quickly adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and was doing things differently in terms of scale, substance and quality while recognizing the need for efficient, fast and effective action on multiple fronts. He stressed that the multiplication of funding instruments must not drive the silos that needed to be broken down to respond to the pandemic. He informed the Commission that communication had gone out to Resident Coordinators on adapting existing and new PBF projects to support socio-economic responses, while not losing sight of medium- and long-term peacebuilding imperatives in support of the Secretary-General's new COVID-19 fund.
 8. The Chair noted that there was alignment among Member States' views on the role of the PBC in COVID-19 response and shared his intention to discuss follow-up actions with the Vice-Chairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.