

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Youth, Peace and Security
11 February 2020
Chair's Summary

1. On 11 February 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an ambassadorial-level meeting on Youth, Peace and Security under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto, Vice-Chair of the PBC, on youth, peace and security. The meeting aimed at exploring ways of further contributing to the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015). The UN Envoy on Youth and UNFPA briefed the Commission. Youth representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan and Sierra Leone shared their experiences in peacebuilding, and representatives of the respective Missions in New York presented national strategies and plans in support of youth, peace and security. The EU delegation included a group of youth representatives who are actively advancing youth, peace and security related issues in Europe. Countries that engage with the PBC and an AU representative shared experiences.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair welcomed the commitment of the PBC to help advance the youth, peace and security agenda. The Chair noted that the meeting followed an expert-level discussion that took place last November at the initiative of El Salvador, during which young peacebuilders from The Gambia and Kyrgyzstan shared innovative peacebuilding initiatives. He noted that since the adoption of resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security, the Commission has actively sought to increase its engagement in support of young peacebuilders, which further deepened following resolution 2419 (2018) in which the Security Council requested the Commission to advise on ways to engage youth meaningfully in national efforts to build and sustain peace. The Chair noted that through its country-specific and regional visits and discussions, the Commission regularly heard from young people and has been inspired by the experiences of several youth representatives from around the world who build peace through local and grassroots delivery mechanisms. The Chair reminded participants that key elements of the discussion would feed into the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture.
3. Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth explained that progress on youth, peace and security varies from country to country, and mentioned some positive examples of countries that have established national plans or strategies to help advance the agenda by empowering their youth. The Envoy recommended that youth, peace and security should be integrated into all aspects of the Commission's work. She noted in particular the vital role that the Commission can play in support of the recommendations of the Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, *The Missing Peace*, including facilitating discussions on how to assess success in youth engagement and accountability. The Special Envoy called on the Member States to consider the funding constraints faced by youth and youth-led organizations, which limit their engagement in support of sustainable peace. Citing the example of a European youth policy cooperation initiative, the Special Envoy remarked that

the issue of youth, peace and security is a not only a concern of the global south and encouraged all countries to share their experiences.

4. Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Director of UNFPA's Policy & Strategy Division welcomed the timeliness of the PBC meeting given the imminent release of the first report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security, and its presentation to the Security Council in April. He stressed that investing in youth is a necessary condition for sustaining peace and meeting the sustainable development goals. He called for further international action to help reach the full potential of youth, including through increased funding for youth-led peacebuilding efforts. He encouraged the Commission to continue to invite youth representatives to participate in its meetings and to engage youth during its visits. He recommended that the Commission should continue to encourage Member States to develop, through consultative and participatory processes, national frameworks in support of youth, peace and security. He stressed the importance of protecting youth peacebuilders from harassment and threats. He underscored the need for adequate resources in support of initiatives that aim to empower local youth peacebuilders and welcomed the pertinent contributions of Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund in that regard. He also highlighted the importance of ensuring complementarity between different peacebuilding initiatives in support of youth.
5. Ms. Samira Fatma Baručija from Youth for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina outlined the work of her organization, Youth for Peace, in facilitating interfaith and inter-ethnic youth dialogues in the complex peacebuilding context of her country. She explained that in the absence of adequate 'dealing with the past' mechanisms and a clear vision for reconciliation, young people feel trapped in a vicious circle of negative narrative and lack of solutions-based discussions. She mentioned that the primary focus of Youth for Peace is to promote sustainable coexistence in the country through focused discussions that aim to identify practical solutions for shared problems. She urged Member States to support youth in their efforts to sustain peace, including by partnering with youth groups and networks to advance youth initiatives. She reminded participants that youth activism is not a hobby but an essential requirement to help shape a better future.
6. Mr. Chernor Bah, Chief Executive Officer of Purposeful in Sierra Leone presented his personal trajectory and the reasons that motivated him to dedicate his life to helping young people in Sierra Leone and beyond to participate in national peacebuilding initiatives. He described the work of Purposeful, a feminist movement in Sierra Leone that designs and implements innovative grassroots programmes with and for girls. He condemned the systematic exclusion of girls, especially those living in rural areas, from decision-making processes, and emphasized the importance of empowering and building the capacity of girls to speak-up and contribute to public affairs. He encouraged Member States and international development partners to invest in amplifying the voices of marginalized and underprivileged youth.

7. Ms. Tazhykan Shabdanova, President of the Foundation for Tolerance International in Kyrgyzstan, emphasized the importance of ensuring a safe space for the expression of youth voices. She summarized the work of her Foundation in support of inter-cultural, non-violent communication among young people in Kyrgyzstan. She presented ongoing efforts, with support from the Ministry of Education, PBF and UNDP, and using information technology (participatory video) to tackle causes of marginalization and social divisions. She stressed the importance of capacity building, with a focus on lobbying and advocacy skills, so that young people can meaningfully contribute to the design and execution of local- and national-level solutions to development and social challenges. She encouraged PBC members to support youth advocacy efforts that aim to enrich public policies by taking into account young peoples' actual experiences and needs.

8. Participants welcomed the briefings and made the following observations, which serve as informal input into the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture:
 - Recognising the positive contributions of young women and men in promoting peaceful and prosperous societies, building effective and accountable institutions, and advancing the sustainable development goals, including SDG 16, participants stressed the need for more countries to adopt national plans on youth, peace and security.
 - They emphasized the need for a shift in power dynamics, which would allow young peacebuilders, especially young women peacebuilders in rural areas, to be part of relevant decision-making processes at the central level.
 - They noted with concern the exclusion of marginalized youth from socio-economic opportunities and political processes due to, *inter alia*, underemployment, poverty, and limited access to quality education.
 - They also noted increasing youth mistrust towards political institutions and acknowledged the importance of challenging stereotypes that label youth as troublemakers, which in turn results in their exclusion from peacebuilding related initiatives.
 - They stressed the need for greater inclusion of youth representatives in coalitions and partnerships that aim to support peacebuilding initiatives and processes.
 - They emphasized the need for adequate financing to help empower youth to fulfil their potential as agents of positive change. In this respect, several participants acknowledged that the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund had taken proactive measures to support young people's critical contributions to peacebuilding at the local and national levels. In particular, some Member States noted with satisfaction that, through its annual Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI), PBF remains the largest funding initiative in support of the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), including through direct support to civil society partners.
 - They called for greater consideration to innovation and appropriate application of information technology in order to increase youth engagement and better support youth-led peacebuilding and sustaining peace activities.
 - They expressed concern over an increase in threats against young activists and underscored the importance of ensuring safer environments for young peacebuilders.
 - They underscored the need for strengthened reporting and accountability mechanisms in support of the youth, peace and security agenda, and in this respect welcomed the role that

the PBC can continue to play as a political platform that allows regular sharing of experiences and discussion on related progress and challenges.

- They encouraged the PBC to partner with relevant regional organizations and international financial institutions to support the engagement of young people in national and regional-level peacebuilding discussions, and to advocate for inclusion of youth perspectives and the creation of opportunities for youth participation in decisionmaking in PBC advice to the Security Council.
- The Commission committed to doing more to support the critical peacebuilding role of youth, in line with Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), and with the recommendations of the Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, *The Missing Peace*. Follow-up action includes the adoption of an action plan for youth, peace and security and the holding of an annual meeting to discuss the status of its implementation. The Commission reiterated its intention to continue inviting young people to participate in its meetings and engage with youth during its visits.

In his concluding remarks, the Chair thanked the participants for their continuous commitment and underscored the need for follow-up PBC discussions on youth, peace and security.