

Peacebuilding Commission

Informal expert-level meeting on Good Practices in Peacebuilding

The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Role of PBC in Missions' Drawdown

21 November 2016

Main findings

I. Introduction

1. On 21 November 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission convened an expert-level meeting on Good Practices in Peacebuilding on the topic “The challenge of sustaining peace: Role of PBC in Missions' Drawdown”. The meeting was convened by the PBC Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea) and its purpose was to follow-up to the meeting the Commission held on 7 October and on what lessons can be drawn from peacebuilding experiences in countries in transition, including the early PBC engagements in Burundi and Sierra Leone, as well as in Timor-Leste. The meeting represented an opportunity to discuss transitions in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, as well as how the PBC can support countries undergoing transitions.
2. The meeting was opened by the Chair and benefited from presentations by the Vice-Chair of the PBC (Sweden), a representative of the DPKO-DFS/UNDP/DPA Project on UN Transitions, and by a representative of UNIOGBIS (via VTC).
3. The Chair opened the session by recalling how the meeting of 7 October identified a set of useful tools to be applied during times of transition, such as early and long-term planning, joint assessment, and local capacity development. He noted that it was now important to further discuss how the convening role of the PBC could be used to ensure sustained support for peacebuilding priorities in the aftermath of drawdown or withdrawal of peacekeeping or special political missions. In this connection, he expressed his hope that, by discussing the ongoing transitions in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau, the Commission could identify a list of recommendations that can potentially be applied to these and other future transition situations.

II. Summary of Presentations by Panelists

4. The Vice-Chair (Sweden) underscored that Liberia represented an important test for the UN, including the PBC, in view of the Security Council's decision on UNMIL drawdown. In connection to the advisory role of the Commission, the Vice-Chair briefed on the work done by the PBC Liberia Configuration since early 2016 to support Liberia at a critical time of transition. She recalled the mission to Monrovia of January 2016 to revise the Statement of Mutual Commitment (SMC), which represented a useful opportunity to reinforce the convening platform of the PBC by engaging the Liberian Government, the UN Country Team, DPKO, UNDP and civil society organizations. She reported on the Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF), which took place in Monrovia on 20 October, and was aimed at identifying remaining root causes of conflict as well as key priorities to be considered in the aftermath of UNMIL's drawdown.

5. In connection with the resolutions on sustaining peace and with the role the PBC should play in supporting countries in transition, the Vice-Chair noted that the advisory role of the Commission had to go beyond the Security Council and should remain engaged even after UNMIL's drawdown and provide advice and support to the UN system as a whole. In this regard, the PBC should further strengthen its convening role and better utilize the expertise and analytical capacities of the UN system. The Vice-Chair added that the Commission should engage a broader and more diverse range of partners, including development actors, and look at a broader definition of transitions.
6. The representative of the DPKO-DFS/UNDP/DPA Project on UN Transitions briefed on the ongoing transition in Cote d'Ivoire and recalled that resolution S/RES/2284 (2016) renewed the mandate of UNOCI until April 2017. He informed that, in preparation for the drawdown, the UN worked with the Government to develop a transition strategy and to consolidate peacebuilding gains by strengthening state capacity, social cohesion, and by looking at SSR, economic empowerment of youth and women, intra-community dialogue, etc.
7. He also stressed the importance of early assessment and planning, as well as of national ownership. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, he noted that the government and the UN had created joint working groups on issues including social cohesion, human rights, security and defense, law enforcement and defense mechanisms. These joint efforts were useful to identify residual challenges and discuss ways in which the UN could support the Government address them. In conclusion, he referred to the important work done by the Peacebuilding Fund and the need to sustain financial support throughout and beyond UNOCI drawdown.
8. The representative of UNIOGBIS informed that, despite the recent political instability, Guinea-Bissau achieved three important peacebuilding gains: 1) the maintenance of constitutional order, which has not been disrupted since the holding of free and fair elections in 2014; 2) the fact that the military has not interfered in national politics; and 3) the absence of direct fighting and widespread violence in the country. However, despite this progress, a number of drivers of instability remained to be addressed, including political-military dynamics, impunity, weak institutions and unequal access to economic opportunities.
9. In connection with missions' drawdown, he noted that Guinea-Bissau was at an earlier stage compared to Cote d'Ivoire or Liberia, and that the planning for UNIOGBIS' drawdown had not started yet. He underscored that a degree of relative stability was necessary to ensure that a UN transition facilitate the consolidation of gains, rather than contribute to a relapse into violence. In this regard, the convening role of the PBC could enhance coherence in the efforts of the international community to tackle identified peacebuilding challenges. He also noted that, since UN transitions were political processes which had implications on the broader country transitions, the PBC, through its advisory role to the Security Council, could play a more visible role in articulating views and messages about the relationship between the UN's and the country's transitions. Finally, he noted that UN transitions should focus not only on the advance planning and the execution of a mission drawdown, but should also pay due consideration of the medium- to long-term effect of UN transitions on the society. In this connection, PBC and PBF, working in synergy, could ensure a long-term political and financial support of the international community.

III. Discussion

10. Member States welcomed the briefings and the opportunity to further discuss good practices which were emerging from transition processes in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. In connection with Cote d'Ivoire, it was highlighted that the country had made important progress since the political crisis of 2002-2011. The presidential elections of 2015 and the recent constitutional referendum were a demonstration of the important work done by the Government, in

partnership with the UN and international partners. It was recognized that, by addressing root causes of conflict and actively addressing priority areas such as SSR, DDR, rule of law, inter-community tensions, rule of law, human rights and national reconciliation, Cote d'Ivoire was now in a position to take on the tasks from UNOCI. In this connection, it was also recognized that further efforts in institution building should be prioritized.

11. Delegations also referred to the importance of tackling cross border challenges to peacebuilding and of working with regional and sub-regional organizations. The Peacebuilding Fund was also recognized as an important player in addressing such challenges, for example by enhancing cross-border cooperation between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia.

IV. Main findings

12. On the basis of the presentations and interactions between the panelists and the Member States, the following represents the main findings from this meeting:

- In countries undergoing transitions, in particular transitions from PKOs, it is critical that a broad range of stakeholders is engaged, including national authorities, the UN (UNCTs and headquarters), regional and sub-regional organizations, and the civil society. In this regard, the PBC can provide a unique and inclusive platform to enhance cooperation and provide policy recommendations.
- National ownership and the need to ensure strong institutions are critical to ensure that governments can properly function after PKOs drawdown.
- Early and long-term planning is critical to successfully manage transitions.
- The concept of sustaining peace, as spelled out in resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), is not yet fully shared by all stakeholders, including the Member States. PBC has a role to play in raising awareness of the concept and sensitizing the UN system of the goals to be achieved through these resolutions.
- The cross-border dimension of peacebuilding is key, particularly during transitions. The international community should engage relevant actors to increase attention to cross-border challenges. The work of the Peacebuilding Fund in this area represents an important evolution.
