

Peacebuilding Commission

Informal expert-level meeting on Good Practices in Peacebuilding

The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Lessons from Previous Transitions

7 October 2016

Main findings

I. Introduction

1. On 7 October 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission convened an expert-level meeting on Good Practices in Peacebuilding on the topic “The challenge of sustaining peace: Lessons from previous transitions”. The meeting was convened by the PBC Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea). The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a conversation within the Commission 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.
2. The meeting was opened by the Vice-Chair and benefited from presentations by DPA, DPKO, UNDP, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone (WANEP) and PBSO.
3. The Chair opened the session by informing Member States that, in implementing relevant recommendations of the resolutions on sustaining peace, the PBC meeting on Good Practices in Peacebuilding represents an evolution of what was previously referred to as the Working Group on Lessons Learned. The purpose of these discussions will be to convene all relevant actors within and outside the UN in order to develop and share good practices in peacebuilding. He added that, as highlighted at the PBC Annual Session of 23 June 2016, the drawdown of peacekeeping missions can lead to reduced support from the international community, placing a burden on national capacities in an environment where institutions are still weak. In this connection, he noted that today’s discussion is aimed at identified good practices on how peacebuilding actors support countries during and after transitions.

II. Summary of Presentations by Panelists

4. PBSO noted that, in view of the changing nature of conflicts, it is important to address transitions in a comprehensive manner, looking not only at the transition from peacekeeping operations but also from humanitarian to development, and from conflict to peace. He noted that early and a long-term view to planning, at the technical and political level, is crucial to ensure successful transitions. He also underscored the importance of a system-wide approach to transitions, referring to the good practice of the assessment conducted in August 2016 in the Central African Republic.
5. DPA noted that transitions are a clear priority for the work of the UN and recognized that there can be different kinds of transitions, including UN and country transitions. In this connection, he underscored the importance of ensuring that UN transitions are managed in a way that takes into account transitions happening at the country level. Looking at the UN policy framework on transitions, he referred to various efforts to establish and utilize

benchmarks, in particular, the *Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal*, which was endorsed by the Secretary-General in February 2013 and lists five key principles that should be applied in transitions: early planning; UN integration; national ownership; national capacity development; and communication. Referring to the transitions that took place in Burundi and Sierra Leone, he recognized that, in 2005, the newly established PBC and PBF played an important role. In particular, the joint engagement of Commission and Fund proved to be mutually reinforcing and ensured that funding was spent in an effective way. At the same time, he noted that the PBF was not catalytic enough.

6. DPA also noted that, while the UN has a good record in supporting transitions while they take place, its support to the post-transition phase needs to be improved. Sustaining peace is intended as a concrete approach to strengthen that support.
7. The representative of DPKO, member of the DPKO-DFS/UNDP/DPA Project on UN Transitions, noted that a key priority is determining the right timing and scope of transitions in order to avoid that the UN transition only takes place when the country is also capable of managing its own transition. In this connection, he underscored that ensuring continued political and financial support to institution building is critical to support countries develop capacities to address remaining challenges. He said that the PBC played an important role, for example in Burundi, in keeping the attention of the international community focused on those key issues. The PBF was also critical in supporting countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Timor-Leste address important peacebuilding priorities in a transparent and predictable way.
8. Reflecting on the good practices of the UN management of transitions, DPKO noted that important elements to avoid relapse into conflict include: adopt forward-looking transitions which focus on the need to consolidate gains, including by strengthening local capacities; strengthen coherence by putting in place joint assessments and planning efforts and joint structures, such as in Haiti or Timor-Leste; and using benchmarks as a framework for discussion to determine the speed of transition processes, as done in Burundi.
9. The representative of WANEP noted that Sierra Leone is widely recognized as a successful case of peace consolidation. He noted that, after 11 years of civil war, the international community helped Sierra Leone not only to restore security but also to establish state authority across the country and to strengthen several democratic institutions. He stressed that the peacebuilding potential of local people was one of the most significant lessons learned in the transition process and, in this regard, the PBC proved to be sensitive and supportive of the roles women and youth play and could play in building peace. The PBF was also instrumental in bringing together, through the National Steering Committee, equal representations among UN, the government and non-state actors. In relation to funding, WANEP underscored the need to increase funding for peacebuilding and local peace infrastructures, noting that peacebuilding needs sustained attention and political, technical and financial support from the international community, including regional and sub-regional actors.
10. In relation to the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste, PBSO briefed on the work done by the Fund to support the three countries at critical junctures of their transitions. On Burundi, the PBF allocated \$65 million between 2007 and 2016. Since early 2007, following the peaceful democratic elections in 2005, the country's placement on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2006, and the transition from a peacekeeping mission (ONUB), to an integrated mission (BINUB), Burundi has been one of PBF's priority countries. PBSO noted that PBF provided quick, targeted funding to Burundi to contribute to several critical drivers of peace – fostering open political dialogue; reform of the security forces; management of land conflicts for returning refugees; access to justice; and the formation of transitional justice mechanisms.

11. In Sierra Leone, the PBF provided catalytic support at critical moments, especially during UNIPSIL's drawdown in 2013-2014, in three key areas: political dialogue in support of the constitutional review process, security sector reform and human rights. Providing over \$52 million from 2007 to 2016, the Fund has supported Sierra Leone with a wide range of projects, including assistance to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, assistance for victims' reparations and dealing with political party conflict mediation and codes of conduct. In Timor-Leste, the PBF provided support to help with the relocation and reintegration of IDPs from the 2006/7 conflict.
12. The representative of UNDP echoed earlier recommendations by underscoring the importance of early planning for managing transitions, and recognizing the critical role of the PBF in supporting the strengthening of national capacities.

III. Discussion

13. Member States welcomed the briefings and stressed the importance for the UN to manage transitions in line with the timing and requirements of the countries concerned, ensuring that peacekeeping operations do not withdraw without adequate post-transition plans, especially the capacity of local institutions. Delegations referred to the role the PBC can play in supporting countries undergoing transitions and one Member State suggested that, in the case of the withdrawal of UNMIL, the Commission should give its advice on the kind of support the UN should provide Liberia. In particular, it was noted that the Commission has a role to play both at the country-level, complementing the work of the Security Council, and at the normative level. In this regard, the Commission should play its bridging role between security, development and human rights by convening discussions with a broad range of stakeholders, including development actors, and making sure that their perspectives are taken into account and contribute to improve the quality of its advisory role to the Security Council.
14. Participants also underscored that a more flexible PBC, which can discuss a broader set of countries, can represent an important platform to strengthen coherence in the way the UN supports transitions.

IV. Main findings

15. On the basis of the presentations and interactions between the panelists and the Member States, the following represents the main findings from this meeting:
 - Sustaining peace, as spelled out in resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016) is a critical approach to ensure that transitions do not lead to a relapse into conflict.
 - Early and long-term planning, which needs to include a system-wide approach, is critical to successfully manage transitions.
 - PBC and PBF, in particular when working in synergy, represent important actors to maintain the attention of the international community in the aftermath of transitions and in providing the support required by countries to strengthen local institutions.
 - The PBC, in view of its inclusive membership and the mandate to convene a wide range of relevant stakeholders, should engage civil society organizations (CSOs), international financial institutions (IFIs) and development actors, in order to provide a comprehensive advice to the Security Council and bring the political, development, human rights and

humanitarian actors closer together in a transition setting.

- There are various kinds of transitions, including those from PKOs, from SPMs, political transitions and those from war to peace.
- Benchmarks are important frameworks for discussion to determine the speed and the methodology of transition processes, ensuring transparency and predictability that reassures relevant stakeholders to maintain continued engagement.
- Civil society, in particular youth and women groups, is a critical actor in peacebuilding. PBC and PBF have done an important work in include CSOs in their peacebuilding work.
