

Peacebuilding Commission Informal Meeting on the Solomon Islands

7 June 2017

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 7 June 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an informal meeting to address the situation in the Solomon Islands, based on the request of the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, H.E. Mr. Manasseh Sogavare. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Chair of the PBC.

1. The Chair opened the session by emphasizing that he convened this meeting, upon the request of the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, to hear his views on the situation in the Solomon Islands at an important time of transition. The meeting testified to the convening power of the PBC, and its ability to serve as a platform to interested countries to engage with a broad range of partners on their efforts to sustain peace, including good practices, lessons learned and current challenges. He added that the PBC has been supporting countries undergoing various types of transition, and in the context of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) coming to an end in June 2017, that it would be crucial for the international community to remain engaged with the Solomon Islands.
2. Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, H.E. Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, thanked the PBC the opportunity to present the case of his country. He stated the commitment of his government to ensure the Solomon Islands does not slide back into conflict, reminding that even after conflicts are officially over, countries suffer the impacts of weakened or destroyed institutions, infrastructure and relationships, costing them development opportunities. As post-conflict development is financially expensive, socially sensitive, and relies on a fragile peace, relapse was common. He stressed that the wealth of knowledge and experience of the Commission could assist the country in these challenging times and he called for a partnership between the Commission and his country. Explaining the history of the conflict in the Solomon Islands, he emphasized that RAMSI was a successful model of intervention, which restored law and order, helped build the police that now had the capacity to deploy to UN peacekeeping missions. Post-conflict assistance had to continue after RAMSI's drawdown, for the Solomon Islands to achieve sustainable peace. He commended the contributions of the PBF in his country, detailing its contributions to reconciliation, the National Dialogue and inclusive societies. He listed the remaining challenges as land issues, corruption, and particularly tackling the destructive effects of climate change, and voiced his hope that the UN, the PBC and the PBF would stand by the Solomon Islands in addressing these.
3. The Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, commended the unique experience of the Solomon Islands in overcoming divisions and tensions and setting a

forward looking agenda, and explained the ways the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) was supporting them in the transitional phase. DPA had supported several provincial dialogues in close liaison with local partners, by deploying a gender and mediation expert, which would soon culminate in a National Dialogue. The Peace and Development Adviser (PDA) assisted the government in conflict-sensitive programming. Mr. Feltman underlined the importance of the PBC to facilitate the sharing of experiences of governments facing similar issues, and called on the PBC to continue innovating its working methods.

4. The UN Resident Coordinator for the Pacific, Ms. Osnat Lubrani, believed that the candid and vocal articulation by the Solomon Islands government and its people of a yearning for national unity, social cohesion and greater political stability instilled belief that long-term peace and stability in the Solomon Islands was achievable, as RAMSI was preparing to withdraw. Solomon Islands' commitment to peace was grounded in action, including through the adoption of a national peace policy, establishment of a ministry dedicated to advancing peace and unity, and partnership with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the PBC. The UN was committed to supporting the Solomon Islands; it was already invested in a short term programme funded through the PBF, in partnership with DPA, UNDP and UN Women. The UN's peacebuilding support included the convening of comprehensive dialogues in three key provinces in Solomon Islands, leading to a national dialogue event in June 2017. The UN was also supporting important transitional justice processes, as well as the inclusion of women and youth. A national women's summit last year had culminated in a national women, peace and security action plan, and it had also supported a national dialogue with provincial youth leaders. The UN and the Peacebuilding Fund in particular had a unique role to continue to play in the transition phase, as convener, facilitator and supporter of innovative approaches in specific peacebuilding and reconciliation areas, working in concert with other donors.
5. The representative of the Young Women's Parliamentary Group's (YWPG), Ms. Regina Lepping, emphasized the importance of young people to be leaders in their own communities – not in the future, but today and now. Young people wanted to be active and participate and take part in decision making processes. She had been elected a secretary to the YWPG, an NGO founded to enter into dialogue with their parliamentarians. PBF was supporting YWPG to facilitate young women's engagement and empowerment. Youth involvement in peace initiatives and dialogues empowered them, and helped them be an active part of peacebuilding and development processes. The UN's support in this area was appreciated.
6. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, underscored that the Solomon Islands transition provided the PBC with an excellent opportunity to put to good use its convening and advisory functions in support of Solomon Islands' own national efforts and to hear diverse voices and views, and to prove the benefits of the PBC as a partnership forum that can catalyze joint action by the UN system and induce all relevant partners to redouble their assistance to the Solomon Islands in its critical transition. The Solomon Islands had achieved remarkable progress since 2003, and put the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on top of its agenda, reflecting a true

commitment to people-centered, inclusive approaches. The UN and its partners would continue to support the Solomon Islands; a current PBF funded project of \$2.5 million, implemented by UNDP and UN Women, was already supporting the country in moving towards establishing inclusive space for dialogue and reconciliation, and supporting women and youth engagement peace processes. He called on the members of the PBC and other partners present at the discussion to continue supporting the Solomon Islands.

7. The Permanent Representative of the Federal States of Micronesia, speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), emphasized that their region was generally peaceful, and their issues did not often end up on the agenda of the UN. PIF, in a spirit of solidarity, provided police and military support to RAMSI since 2003, in support of the government and the people of the Solomon Islands. In the transition period, the support of the UN and other partners to peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands was of critical importance. With this support, the government would be able to address its issues and move towards long-term development.
8. The Representative of the Philippines, speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), praised the important progress the Solomon Islands had achieved with RAMSI support, as well as the current efforts to address post-conflict challenges such as corruption, rule of law, and land issues. Solomon Islands had recently deployed their first ambassador in Jakarta to the ASEAN, to work in partnership in addressing peace and security, development and human rights challenges. ASEAN would remain engaged with the Solomon Islands, in the framework of the country's 2016 -2035 development strategy.
9. Members of the Commission welcomed the opportunity to discuss the situation in the Solomon Islands. In their interventions, delegations focused on the following issues:
 - As Solomon Islands moved into this next phase of its efforts to sustain peace and build prosperity, the importance of the ongoing support of Solomon Islands' partners, including international and non-state actors.
 - The relevance of a more flexible PBC, which can be an important partnership platform for Member States to discuss peacebuilding progress and challenges.
 - The significance of having a PBC discussion at a critical time of transition in Solomon Islands, to take stock of the RAMSI drawdown and explore areas of PBC support in the upcoming years.
 - The importance of having a long-term dialogue between the PBC and the government of the Solomon Islands towards a positive outcome of the country's transition.
 - The success of the Solomon Islands with the support of the RAMSI mission, PIF and regional partners, in restoring law and order and basic services, and the importance of sharing such best practices at PBC.
 - The need to continue supporting Solomon Islands after RAMSI drawdown, including through programs that support institution building, economic development, and

inclusion, including the empowerment of women and youth to take part in peace and development processes.

- The importance of adopting a coherent approach of support, taking into account the direct linkage of climate change impact on political, development and security issues.
- The critical role of PBF support, and new opportunities to use PBF funding to catalyze projects that would address root causes of conflict, such as land issues and corruption.
- The need to build upon some of the key sources of resilience, including the strong customary institutions surrounding land and kinship, to help manage the current-day challenges facing the country, including those associated with climate change, rapid urbanization, demographic change, and economic transitions.
- The need to explore additional sources of private sector growth that can provide job opportunities for Solomon Islands' young and fast growing population.

10. The Chair closed the meeting thanking the Prime Minister for his decision to address the PBC. He informed that he would discuss with the members of the Commission possible ways in which the PBC could continue its engagement with the Solomon Islands.
