

Meeting between the PBC Chairs Group and the E/SRSGs of PBC agenda countries New York, 15 May 2012

Summary of the meeting

Objective of the meeting

The meeting, co-organized by PBSO and DPA, provided a first opportunity for the PBC Chairs and the E/SRSGs in PBC agenda countries to discuss the nature of their relationship/partnership and how to reinvigorate it on the basis of their respective comparative advantage.

Participants

HE Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen, PR of Bangladesh and Chair of the PBC
HE Ms. Sylvie Lucas, PR of Luxemburg and Chair Guinea Configuration
HE Mr. Tsuneo Nishida, PR of Japan and Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned
HE Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, PR of Canada and Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration
HE Mr. Paul Seger, PR of Switzerland and Chair Burundi Configuration
HE Mr. Ranko Viločić, PR of Croatia and Vice-Chair PBC
HE Ms. Signe Burgstaller, DPR of Sweden representing the Chair of the Liberia Configuration
HE Ms. Regina Maria Cordeiro Dunlop, DPR of Brazil representing the Chair of the Guinea Bissau Configuration
SRSB Karin Landgren, BNUB and UNMIL-designate
SRSB Joseph Mutaboba, UNIOGBIS
SRSB Margaret Vogt, BINUCA
ASG Judy Cheng Hopkins, PBSO
ASG Taye Zerihoun, DPA
Mr. Joao Honwana, Director, DPA
Mr. Ejeviome Eloho Ootobo, Director, PBSO
Mr. Sam Ibok, Acting Director, DPA
Ms. Karina Gerlach, Chief of Office, OUSG DPA
DPA and PBSO staff

Summary of the discussion

1. The informal setting of the meeting allowed for a frank discussion. Many important issues were brought to the table - all of them already been highlighted in the report of the co-facilitators of the 2010 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. Time constraint did not allow for clear shared conclusions but all participants agreed on the usefulness of the interaction and on the need to have it periodically.
2. It emerged forcefully that the PBC is now in a second and critical phase of its life and a closer partnership with the E/SRSGs and with the lead UN departments at headquarters is fundamental for its success. All participants agreed on the need to re-energize political commitment for the PBC, while at the same time addressing the long-standing ambiguities on the value added of the PBC. The PBC Chair informed that his country would host a high-level meeting on peacebuilding in the margins of the General Debate of the GA (September 2012) with the objective of re-energize political commitment to the PBC.
3. The issues raised at the meeting can be clustered under two categories:
 - a) The need to define better the respective roles of the Chairs and of the SRSGs both in the field and at HQ.
 - b) The need to understand better what PBC agenda countries expect from the PBC and what being a member of the PBC actually entails in terms of responsibility to agenda countries.

4. Regarding Chairs and SRSGs respective roles, while in principle there is scope and space for both, more clarity needs to be provided on the details of respective portfolios, more interaction among them is required to coordinate strategies, actions and messaging. It was noted that the Chairs still do not have TORs for their job. While it is recognized that the SRSGs are those having the pulse of the country and those investing in the relationship of trust with local authorities, Chairs have networks in New York, with the Bretton Woods Institutions, with other international organizations, and in capitals that can help the SRSGs in their work.

5. It was underscored that it was essential for the Chairs and the SRSGs to avoid overlaps or duplications in their work or to inadvertently undermine each other. More frequent exchanges on respective strategies and objectives and on how Chairs and SRSGs would support each other towards those objectives. The link between the Chairs and the lead UN Departments should also be strengthened.

6. Regarding the expectations of agenda country on the PBC, additional financial resources and broadening of the donor base were and remain their expectation and main reason for asking to be added to the agenda. This is clearly the understanding of the SRSGs and has also emerged from consultations held by the PBC Chair with recipient countries. One SRSG noted that the value added of the PBC would be to mobilize the ‘means’ to support implementation of peace consolidation activities. On the other hand, it is also clear that the Chairs of the Country Specific Configurations and donor countries see political accompaniment as the main role for the PBC. One Chair underscored how there is a link between resource mobilization and addressing the international community political demands: while the Chair commits to advocate for a country, that country needs to help the Chair by delivering on the demands of the international community.

7. It was noted that ‘resources’ to be mobilized should not only be seen in financial terms, but the international credibility that the PBC brings to countries otherwise ‘off the radar’ of the international community should not be downplayed. While agreeing that resources are not only financial it was noted that thus far the individual members of the Country Specific Configurations have not contributed even non-financial resources. One SRSG pointed out that if the members of the PBC are committed, then they should share the burden. Otherwise the Country Specific Configurations are a group of member states on paper but they do “not mean much” in practice. The question of why PBC agenda countries would also elect to become part of the G7+ and embrace the New Deal was voiced. While not addressing the rationale for the double choice by PBC agenda countries, it was pointed out that Liberia under the new PBC Chair provides an opportunity to see how the PBC and the G7+ advocated principles can converge.

8. A number of other questions were brought for discussion that only found partial answers, including how the experience of the SRSGs can be channelled into the work of the OC, and why some Chairs have opted out from being Chairs. In addition, other important issues were mentioned including the relationship between the Security Council and the PBC.

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