

PBC transitions and options for engagement
Report of the informal discussion among the PBC Chairs and the representatives of
PBC agenda countries - 13 April 2012

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Background:

1. On 13 April 2012 the PBSO and IPI organized a meeting to discuss two important themes: PBC transitions and options for PBC engagement. Participants consisted of the members of the PBC Chairs' Group and the representatives of the countries on the agenda of the PBC. Short presentations provided the participants with an insight of the UN system thinking on these issues. The subsequent discussion was moderated by one of the co-facilitators of the 2010 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. The main goal of the meeting was to find common ground on a number of issues related to the topics under consideration - cognizant that more discussions would be required on other issues.

Summary of the discussion

2. IPI and PBSO delivered welcoming remarks. PBSO noted that the starting point of the discussion is the recommendations emanating from the 2010 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. PBSO underscored that it is operating in a crowded field and that its new strategic plan is a reflection of commitment to assist the PBC implement the findings of the review. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to discuss different forms of engagement by the PBC, including lighter forms of the engagement; exiting from the PBC agenda, which require in depth discussion since the founding resolutions say little about it. Because the PBC operates alongside other actors in the field, presentations from the UN system, including the World Bank, aimed at providing participants with the latest thinking on these issues.
3. PBSO introduced a draft non-paper entitled: Options for PBC engagement and evolution of the engagement. The non-paper provided ideas of different ways in which the PBC could engage depending on the scope of the engagement. It also proposed an iterative process through which the PBC could periodically assess the effectiveness of its engagement and modify it in line with evolving circumstances in the field until such a point when enough progress in enough peacebuilding areas has been achieved for the PBC to consider disengaging.
4. The World Bank informed that data starting 1978 pointed to a strong correlation between poverty and institutional fragility, and conflict. Yet, to date the Bank does not have dedicated financing for countries that fall into the fragile category. On the other hand, the Bank has dedicated financing mechanisms for re-engaging post-conflict countries for up to 10 years after re-engagement. The Bank informed of

internal discussions on how to manage the tension between the need to cater for more difficult situations and the need to reward success in order not to encourage moral hazard type of behavior.

5. DPKO, as the Chair UN-wide Integration Steering Group, informed that the UN is increasingly thinking of transition as a process rather than as an event and consequently trying to integrate planning and transition in the same process, including by setting goals and benchmarks and transition strategies from the beginning. UNMISS (South Sudan), for example, is incorporating its exit strategy in its initial planning. UNMIT's (East Timor) transition plan identifies roles and responsibilities and provides a gap analysis for the time the mission draws down. DPKO noted the need for the UN to manage better the political aspects of transition and to shift away from responding to Member States' imperatives and more to the situation on the ground. DPKO highlighted the need for UN peace operations to focus more on national capacity and on knowledge transfer as well as assessing the operations' economic impact. DPKO suggested that PBC could make a contribution in areas where the missions could not, e.g. in Liberia the PBC was championing the building of justice hubs.
6. PBSO provided examples of possible indicators coming from objective data sets but also perception surveys to illustrate how a combination of benchmarks and indicators could support PBC decisions during engagement and transition in any given country.
7. During the ensuing discussion, emphasis was placed on the need for the PBC working methods to retain sufficient flexibility and adaptability according to country circumstances. PBC engagement should be seen as a continuum from the beginning to the end. While useful to have illustrations of possible types of engagement, combinations of them or even other possibilities as well as flexibility on how to apply them and to move from one model to another should be retained. Consideration was given to the costs and benefits of operating without a country-specific configuration (CSC). There was general sense that even for lighter forms of PBC engagement, the Chairs/Coordinator could not perform the task alone but needed to rely on the support of core groups of engaged PBC members.
8. One participant noted how different the demands on each CSC are depending on country specific needs but also on what already exists on the ground. In some countries the PBC is one of the several actors, while in others it is one of the few players – this should also determine the type of PBC engagement. Civil society should be involved from the beginning.
9. The pros and cons of time-bounded instruments of engagements were discussed at length. While all agreed on the desirability of having timeframes also to ensure the credibility of the process, the difficulty and the risk of setting artificial deadlines in highly volatile contexts was also underscored. On balance, it was felt that the transitional nature of PBC engagement have to be reflected in the instrument of engagement from the beginning, while keeping the time bound indicative and

possibly linked to programmatic objectives, specific goals and/or major political milestones. In addition, a baseline against which to measure progress and continuous analysis would be useful. In parallel with time bound instruments of engagement, more effective assessments of progress should take place periodically up until the expiration of the instrument of engagement and when a decision on future PBC engagement is taken (it should be noted that both Burundi and CAR instruments of engagement were time bounded, the first linked to the 2010 elections while a second had a specific deadline). One participant referred to the in-country Joint Steering Committee as potential field-level counterpart for the PBC in New York.

10. The need to manage expectations while keeping the process credible was emphasized by many participants, particularly when it comes to resource mobilization. PBC engagement entails choices and the PBC should settle only for reasonable deliverables. The PBC should focus on a limited number of goals at any point in time and once sufficient progress is achieved on one goal, the PBC could move to another goal. Expectations from governments need to be managed carefully. Punctual rather than programmatic interventions may be better suited for the PBC.
11. Participants agreed that transitioning out of the PBC is a political decision to be taken jointly with the country under consideration and transition should be gradual. Indicators and benchmarks help to inform that decision. The Secretariat was asked to advise on procedures for the PBC to follow when in the process of disengaging; both when PBC and the country agree that it is time to disengage but also in case the PBC and the country have different views on the timing of transition. It was underscored by many that national ownership is the principle guiding the work of the PBC. At the same time, the question was asked as to whether the PBC should unilaterally disengage if it determines that national actors are not ready for peacebuilding. One participant felt that the UN does not have that option and that it has to strive to find useful entry points.
12. The need to clarify better the relationship between the PBC and the UN system at HQ and in the field was mentioned. A suggestion was to make use of all existing mechanisms, e.g., the Senior Peacebuilding Group, to support the work of the PBC. Knowledge available within and outside the UN system should be better structured and brought in support of the work of the PBC. Following a question on the relationship World Bank-UN it was noted that such relationship has to work at the country level.

Main Conclusions:

13. Extensive discussion among the participants underscored the following points:
 - PBC engagement with the countries on its agenda is transitional; while retaining sufficient flexibility, the instrument of engagement should contain from the beginning indicative timelines either linked to programmatic objectives or to country milestones.
 - PBC engagement should be informed by the objectives the PBC has agreed with the country under consideration and by how the PBC fits among the players

- already engaged in each country. The PBC engagement should be flexible and evolve over time on the basis of assessed progress or reversal of progress.
- An effective way to assess progress in the work of the PBC should be a design that combines information and analysis coming from actors in the field and from the other international partners operating in the country. Setting baseline indicators of conditions at the time of engagement against which to assess progress would be useful.
 - A decision on when it is time for the PBC to disengage from a country is foremost political. It should be taken jointly with the country and coordinated with the Security Council and other international organizations seized with the country. Indicators could be used to support the political decision.
 - The Chairs of the CSCs need a more active support from members of the PBC; the idea of core groups of member states in support of the Chair appears to be a viable solution (e.g., Steering Groups).
 - The members of the OC need to become more engaged and participate at decision-making level. At the same time, the OC has to enhance the substantive content and predictability of its deliberations.

Suggested follow-up actions:

PBC Chairs may wish to consider:

- Holding a first informal discussion with E/SRSGs in PBC agenda countries and senior officials from DPKO, DPA, PBSO and UNDP in the margin of the upcoming SRSGs meeting to discuss respective roles and expectations and how to reinforce each other's roles [timeline, May; action PBC Chair and ASG PBSO];
- Including one thematic discussion to the agenda of each Chairs' Group meeting on issues that did not find sufficient space during the first meeting, e.g., effective assessments of progress in peacebuilding and in the work of the PBC in countries on the agenda; procedures for PBC transition; management of expectations on what the PBC can offer [timeline starting June; action PBC Chair with PBSO] [other important issues that have emerged during the discussion are in the process of being tackled through other processes: revamping the role of the PBC OC , is one of the objectives of the work of the OC for 2012 and the relationship between PBC and Security Council will be taken up by the WGLL and the OC]; and
- Deciding on when and how to bring some of the discussed issues to the attention of the PBC OC for consideration [timeline TBC, action PBC Chair with PBSO].

PBSO could:

- Hold a follow-up meeting with DPKO, DPA, UNDP and the World Bank to discuss how analysis (including benchmarks and indicators) and assessment on engagement in PBC agenda countries could be better pulled together to inform parallel processes such as, mission deployment or reconfiguration, World Bank re-engagement, and PBC instrument of engagement [timeline, May-June 2012, action, PBSO];
- Review the non-paper on 'Options for PBC engagement and evolution of the engagement' to reflect the views expressed by the participants at the PBSO/IPI event and submit for further consideration [timeline June 2012; action PBSO];

- Produce a note on procedures for PBC disengagement for future discussion [timeline June-July; action PBSO];
- Produce a note on selected areas of the PBC working methods [timeline May-June; action PBSO]
- Provide the PBC Chair and CSCs with periodic data on progress along certain country-specific indicators [timeline once a year; action PBSO]; and
- Produce an experience-based note on the periodic reviews of progress, on the effectiveness of the Joint Steering Committees and provide recommendations to strengthen both the review process and the Joint Steering Committees [timeline, July-August; action PBSO]

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