



Ambassadorial-level Virtual Consultation of the Peacebuilding Commission 2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

“Institution Building and System-Wide Engagement for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”

2 June 2020

Written submission by Switzerland

Switzerland thanks the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for organizing the virtual thematic consultations on Institution Building and System-Wide Engagement for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in accordance with the alternative procedures for meetings adopted by the PBC. We appreciate the efforts undertaken to ensure that the inputs provided by Member States and briefers on the themes selected for discussion during the informal phase of the review will be properly taken into account.

Institution Building

Regarding the first topic of the consultation, three aspects are particularly important to Switzerland:

First, the principle of subsidiarity. From its own federal experience, Switzerland is well aware of the need to act on multiple levels of governance and with the involvement and contribution of all relevant actors on each level. New ways to strengthen institution building should be encouraged and should be based on the principle of subsidiarity in order to enhance accountability to the people, as formulated by the *UNDP Thematic Paper for the UN Secretary General's 2020 Report on Sustaining Peace and Peacebuilding*.

Switzerland emphasizes the need to strengthen Core Government Functions (CGF) at the local level, in particular in fragile and conflict affected regions. Drivers of conflict and fragility are often found at the local level and have to be tackled at the local level as well. Standardized and top-down solutions for the delivery of services, be it health, education or security, fail to address grievances that may vary according to the local context.

Subsidiarity also means that the state should only get involved in issues, which cannot be handled by private institutions, such as the distribution and management of public goods. Switzerland therefore encourages member states and UN entities to seek cooperation with private sector institutions and to provide space for private and local initiatives. Switzerland supports a people-centered approach to institution building to address needs at all levels of society. The UN system and member states should focus their technical and financial support on building institutions for the people, with the people and where the people are.

Second, infrastructures for peace. So called infrastructures for peace (I4P) can be differentiated from governmental institutions at large. According to an evaluation jointly undertaken by UNDP, the Berghof Foundation and Switzerland, I4P can be understood as a “dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that help build constructive relationships and enhance sustainable resilience of societies against the risks of relapse into violence”. The UN System, working through the

Secretariat as well as Funds, Agencies and Programs and the effective network of Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), is well positioned to build such capacities at all levels of society and learn from successes or failures of the past.

Third, the impact of COVID-19. With the COVID-19 pandemic, national governments have taken exceptional measures that, in certain cases, have weakened democratic institutions and put at risk the Rule of Law. Recalling that, according to international standards, emergency powers have to be compatible with the fundamental principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, we believe that efforts will be necessary in order to reestablish and reinforce democratic institutions and the full spectrum of human rights.

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) can play an important role to accompany countries in rolling back emergency powers and sharing best practice. We also welcome the efforts by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in anticipating the risks to peacebuilding and conflict prevention stemming from COVID-19 and in supporting a coherent UN response to such risks. PBSO should work closely with other parts of the UN System to ensure that conflict-sensitive approaches, a long term perspective and a prevention-lens are applied to risk-analysis and programming both at headquarters and in the field. We commend the efforts to adapt the projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to changed circumstances, where necessary. The UN Peacebuilding Architecture will be ever more needed as we will deal with the longer-term fallout of COVID 19 that affects fragile countries the most.

UN System-Wide Engagement

The notion of “sustaining peace” emphasizes a shift from a phased approach, centered on the peace and security pillar, to a holistic understanding, where a broad range of actors contribute in different ways to build and sustain peace. This is why the need for system-wide engagement is at the core of operationalizing “sustaining peace”, as outlined in the twin resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council of 2016, and in successive reports of the Secretary General. The thematic consultations organized by Switzerland in partnership with the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) in Geneva on 18-19 February in the context of the 2020 review led to a series of recommendations on this topic summarized in the [report](#) by the GPP.

Based on the Geneva consultations and Switzerland’s experience, the following dimensions of a coherent engagement are key and should be further strengthened:

- a) Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus
- b) Human Rights Mechanisms
- c) Cross-sectorial collaboration

A) Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) - Nexus

The HDP-Nexus is the area where most progress has been achieved since 2016. However, the very notion and understanding of what peacebuilding actually means and how it may be integrated in the nexus approach remains partly contested. In this context, Switzerland highlights three main recommendations:

- 1) A common understanding of what is required in order to sustain peace, i.e. a “joined-up” analysis of a given context, is key to system-wide coherence. The PBA has come a long way to encourage cross-pillar analysis in various contexts. PBSO plays an important role in supporting a coherent UN response and could invest further in defining the level of ambition of a “joined-up” analysis and programming. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) should continue to be used as an instrument to promote joint analysis and programming within the UN Country Teams in the field. The establishment of a *Common Country Analysis* and the management of different funding instruments at the intersection of peace, development and humanitarian action require strong coordination. Leadership by the Resident Coordinators in the field, with the necessary support from headquarters, is key in this regard.
- 2) The 2020 PBA Review should re-emphasize how the notion of peacebuilding has evolved beyond its traditional “post-conflict” understanding to encompass a variety of activities, from prevention to preparedness and early warning, to the peace potential of humanitarian action in protracted crises. The review process should help clarifying the different roles in and

contributions towards sustaining peace, and prevent the fear of blurring mandates and diluting accountability among established bodies and organizations.

- 3) In order to scale up the impact of joined-up analysis and programming, a more thorough understanding is needed on the pathways through which peacebuilding, development, humanitarian, human rights and security actors can jointly contribute to peace. These actors should be encouraged to go beyond mere attention to “conflict sensitivity” in their respective areas of intervention. To that effect, Switzerland would like to draw attention to a [paper](#) submitted recently to the High Level Panel on Internal Displacement, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Policy Group.

B) Human Rights Mechanisms

Human rights are essential to building resilient and inclusive societies where everybody, especially the most vulnerable, are protected. They also play a key role in conflict prevention and serve as important early-warning systems. Human rights information and analysis are key for the entire UN system throughout the peace-and-conflict cycle, as they help identifying sustainable solutions and preventing a relapse into conflict.

The Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) Initiative emphasizes the need to integrate a rights-based approach into the work of the whole UN system and to use Human Rights violations as an early warning for tensions and possible conflict. Yet, neither the HRUF, nor progress achieved in the implementation of the 2016 resolutions on the Peacebuilding Architecture, have risen to the challenge of translating early warning into early action. The flow of information and a common understanding have improved, inter alia through the joint project of OHCHR and the Quaker United Nations Office on *Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)* or the creation of a joint OHCHR-PBSO work plan for 2019/20.

Nevertheless, the UN should further improve system-wide engagement by using the full potential of the human rights instruments throughout its activities, from joined-up analysis, shared objectives to common operational programming, decision-making and implementation. In this regard, Switzerland highlights the following recommendations:

- 1) The PBC could strengthen its bridging role by engaging with human rights mechanisms. It could seek to better integrate the knowledge of Special Procedures to encourage discussion on human rights in New York beyond the Third Committee of the General Assembly. It could also encourage informal briefings by the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the High Commissioner of Human Rights to the PBC, and vice-versa.
- 2) The Peacebuilding Architecture as a whole could make better use of the Universal Periodic Review, recommendations of Treaty Bodies, and of relevant reports of other human rights bodies in the analysis of underlying causes of conflict in country situations. For example, this information should be considered to inform thematic priorities for the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as by Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in drawing up the *Common Country Analysis / UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework*.
- 3) The 2020 review should give consideration to a strengthened role of human rights defenders and peacebuilders, with particular attention for the engagement of women, as well as to support human rights education, particularly of youth, as key to meaningful and inclusive participation in peacebuilding processes. In this regard, the PBC should take a strong role in facilitating dialogue and consultations with all segments of society in order to ensure meaningful participation of civil society in peacebuilding processes and efforts.
- 4) Finally, OHCHR could consider creating the position of a sustaining peace focal point in Geneva.

C) Strengthening cross-sectorial collaboration

In line with the UN Development System Reform, the UN should improve system-wide coherence through cross-sectorial collaboration. The Peacebuilding Architecture could enhance linkages with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), for instance, and leverage the peacebuilding potential of other sectors, notably water governance, the management of

natural resources or public health (including the WHO's approach to foster confidence at the frontlines), the security sector and the disarmament community. From our experience in the field, these actors are important partners in different ways. Switzerland highlights the following recommendations:

- 1) Switzerland supports a joint project of the ILO and the Peacebuilding Support Office to create jobs in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. This project is part of the wider UN effort to make more systematic use of such programmes in order to sustain peace. The ILO's latest analysis stating that one in six young people have stopped working since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, shows that such approaches are urgently needed.
- 2) Peace cannot be sustained in an environment fraught with weapons. The *Disarmament Agenda*, launched by the Secretary-General in Geneva in 2018, testifies to this and provides practical pathways to prevent conflict and build and sustain peace through disarmament and arms control. PBSO, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, together with the UN Development System, should explore how disarmament and arms control can be further integrated into peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts carried out by UN Country Teams. As part of risk assessments, *Common Country Analyses* and *Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks*, disarmament and arms control can play a substantial role in sustaining peace, and in conflict prevention in particular. Disarmament and arms control could also be leveraged more strongly in the early phases of peace processes, including during interim security measures, rather than only in post-conflict peacebuilding. The launch of the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) in 2019 by UNODA, PBSO and UNDP as an innovative funding facility under the PBF is a welcome step to facilitate such strategic integration in order to strengthen coherent system-wide engagement.
- 3) The Security Sector is often at the heart of both conflict and conflict prevention or transformation. Engagement with the Security Sector is highly political and contested, as it touches the core of national internal and external sovereignty. While acknowledging the political nature of sustaining peace, the PBA has to find ways to deepen its engagement with the Security Sector taking into account the sensitivities and respecting national and local ownership. To do so, both the PBSO and Country Teams could engage with and support mediation communities and tap into their know-how on facilitating agreement on politically sensitive issues, such as the governance of the security sector.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize an important insight from the thematic consultations in Geneva: *Peacebuilding is more than a discrete set of interventions. **Peacebuilding is an approach, a process-driven method and principled way of engaging and enabling local and national actors to convene and lead their own change processes, which enable them to deal with conflict non-violently.** Building peace after conflict through specific interventions is not enough. Sustaining peace is a mindset and posture that seeks to prevent the outbreak of conflict in the first place.*