Building Sustainable Peace

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How inclusivity, partnerships and a reinforced UN Peacebuilding Architecture will support delivery

QUNO
Quaker United Nations Office

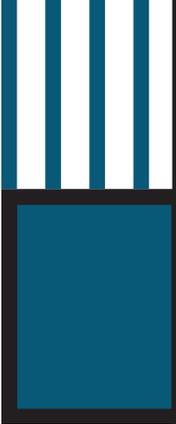**GPPAC**
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

QUNO
Quaker United Nations Office

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Global Partnership
for the Prevention of
Armed Conflict

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to extend their sincerest gratitude to all diplomats and UN staff who agreed to be interviewed for this report. We appreciate the time, reflections and insights that were shared with us; the project would not have been possible without your participation. We look forward to our continued engagement with those who lent their voices to this research as well as the wider peacebuilding community as we work together to strengthen capacities for sustainable peace.

We would like to also express our appreciation for our colleagues at the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) who contributed to the development and completion of this report. Your ideas, guidance and support every step along the way strengthened our work. Additionally, we would like to especially thank Minna Hojland for her contributions to the development of this research project while she was with GPPAC as their UN Liaison until September 2017.
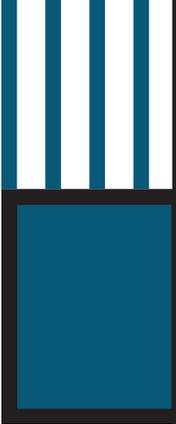
About the organisations

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

Since 1947, QUNO, governed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), has worked with diplomats, UN officials, and civil society to support a UN that prioritizes peace and prevents war. Grounded in the Quaker belief that there is that of the divine in every person, we seek a United Nations that addresses key drivers of violence including structures and systems that produce exclusion and injustice; that facilitates and supports change through peaceful means; and whose policies and practices reflect a diversity of voices, such that people around the world can safely and peacefully achieve their potential. QUNO uses Quaker House and its convening power to facilitate off-the-record meetings and bring perspectives from outside the UN system in order to promote peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict at a policy level in New York.
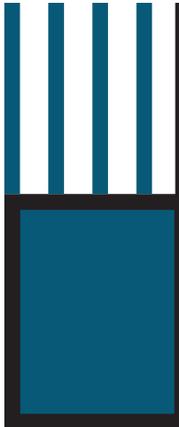
The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

GPPAC is a member-led network of civil society organizations around the world that are actively engaged in local or regional conflict prevention and peacebuilding work. GPPAC's work is guided by a belief in preventive rather than reactive strategies for dealing with conflict, and the conviction that locally developed analysis of root causes and inclusion of civil society actors in the formulation as well as implementation of all stages of work is essential to creating sustainable peace. The network is of global reach but constituted regionally so that the specific priorities, character and agendas of each region is catered for. The network's global priorities are determined by an International Steering Group, made up of representatives from each region.

Acronyms list

AGE	Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture
CSC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission Country-specific Configuration
CSO	Civil society organization
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
GoL	Government of Liberia
GPPAC	The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
GYPI	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative
INGO	International non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PBA	United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
QUNO	Quaker United Nations Office
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIOGBIS	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia

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1 | Introduction

The dual resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace adopted in April 2016 by the United Nations (UN) Security Council and General Assembly (S/RES/2282; A/RES/70/262) marked a fundamental shift in the UN's understanding of peacebuilding. Previously, the UN articulated peacebuilding as a process confined to a post-conflict timeframe, with policy and programming focusing on the needs of countries emerging from conflict. However, by formulating sustaining peace in the resolutions as "a goal and process…aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict,"[1] Member States now universally recognise that efforts must be taken to design and implement policy and planning that contributes to building peace before, during and after conflict. This is an important step forward as it acknowledges that conflicts are not linear and therefore approaches to their prevention and the building of long-term, sustainable peace should not be based on sequential processes.

It must be highlighted that these milestone resolutions build on a vast and dynamic history, including years of normative and political advancements by various parts of the UN system and its membership. This history encompasses a range of UN reports and processes that articulated, evolved and influenced the development of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This includes *An Agenda for Peace;*[2] *A More Secure World: Our shared responsibility;*[3] *In Larger Freedom;*[4] the Secretary-General's report on the *Prevention of Armed Conflict;*[5] the 2015 review processes[6] on peace operations the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) and Women, Peace and Security; and the universal adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[7]

Since the adoption of the resolutions, the UN has experienced a time of dynamic transition. One aspect of this has been the appointment[8] of a new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, who has placed prevention at the core of his work[9] and proposed subsequent reforms for the UN development system, the peace and security pillar and management processes to make the UN better fit for purpose. As the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), we see these changes as an opportunity for the UN, its membership and the larger community of peacebuilding practitioners to continue strengthening efforts to develop and implement contextualised, inclusive and forward-looking policies and programmes for sustainable peace.

Given the on-going developments in the peacebuilding and prevention fields, this joint report by GPPAC and QUNO serves as a contribution to: increase practical understanding of what sustaining peace means; assess the progress and remaining challenges facing peacebuilding practice; and articulate recommendations for the way forward. Its production was the result of desk research as well as interviews with over 35 diverse Member State and UN representatives at UN Headquarters, which provided ample opportunity to learn first-hand how the resolutions have shaped policy and practice by those intimately involved in these processes. Our report presents the main areas explored during the research, namely: 1) the normative, political and operational impact of sustaining peace thus far; 2) analysis on the work of the PBC to uphold its convening, advisory and bridging responsibilities within this changing UN environment; 3) UN and Member States' understanding of and processes to build strategic and operational partnerships with civil society; and 4) the importance and impact of inclusive approaches to sustaining peace. The report highlights progress made to date as well as new or on-going challenges, and provides main findings and recommendations for UN and Member States to improve policy and practice.

KEY MESSAGES

1 **Sustaining peace should be recognised as an evolutionary development that builds upon decades of progress in the UN's understanding of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It is also based on the UN's experience accompanying these processes at the regional and country level around the world.** This long history provides the political weight and legitimacy to support actors as they move towards operationalisation. By adopting the dual resolutions, all Member States now recognise that peacebuilding must be the thread running throughout the UN's policy and programming to ensure greater coordination and coherence for sustainable peace.

2 **Member States, with UN support, should now focus on turning words into action to deliver sustainable peace in a comprehensive, integrated and coherent manner at UN Headquarters and regional and country levels.** Thus far, progress has been made conceptually and politically, but efforts remain centred at UN Headquarters. Action on sustaining peace must now become operational, ensuring impact on the ground well beyond New York. It is particularly critical that the UN Secretariat, regional and country offices and missions, as well as Member States, have the capacity, operational leadership and resources to deliver on sustaining peace.

3 **Sustaining peace provides an opportunity to learn from and build upon the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), but far more remains to be done to enhance the PBC's capacities.** The sustaining peace resolutions refocused attention on the work of the PBC, reaffirmed its critical role within the UN and provided it with strengthened political legitimacy. As such, there may now be greater expectations for the PBC to deliver on its mandate and show tangible results. While progress continues to be made in enhancing its convening role and flexible working methods, effort should be taken by the membership and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to ensure that the PBC can more consistently measure and assess its impact. Additionally, the PBC's unique convening role should continue to be capitalised on, allowing it to bring together relevant actors and support holistic peacebuilding planning for countries in focus, including through increasing attention on linkages across the peace and security, development and human rights pillars. The PBC must also continue to strengthen its partnership with civil society to more structurally and systematically include diverse perspectives. Lastly, despite adopting the Gender Strategy, there is limited understanding and implementation of this document, which must be addressed to ensure that the PBC is advancing gender inclusive and responsive peacebuilding.

4 **Inclusivity and partnerships are critical to sustaining peace but remain under-utilised in practice.** The sustaining peace resolutions reaffirm the centrality of inclusivity and the necessity for operational and structural partnerships in building peace. While the vast majority of interviewees reaffirmed the importance of inclusive approaches to sustaining peace and recognised the need for partnerships with civil society, this research discovered an urgent need to provide opportunities for greater clarity on how to develop and implement truly inclusive policies and programming, amplify existing best practices on inclusion and move forward operationally to live up to the commitments articulated in the resolutions. This is particularly true with regards to the inclusion and participation of and partnership with, civil society organisations (CSOs) working on women's rights.

5 **Barriers and fragmentation that persist must be overcome.** Obstacles to effective coordination and implementation continue to adversely impact efforts to deliver on sustaining peace. Such barriers exist within the UN, permanent missions of Member States to the UN and civil society. This research focused specifically on the fragmentation that permeates within many Member States' permanent missions and the UN Secretariat, and the challenges that this poses to moving forward crosscutting issues like sustaining peace. Implementing sustaining peace requires personnel, offices and departments, whether within the UN or Member States' permanent missions, to have the channels, working methods and structures in place that support cross-sector strategic engagement and collaboration. Breaking down silos for sustaining peace must ultimately extend beyond the UN and affect the culture and working methods of the broader peacebuilding community of practice.

Sustaining peace: building on the past to move peacebuilding forward

2

" 'sustaining peace'...should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostiles, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development..."

When reflecting on sustaining peace, one must first recall that the UN has a vast normative, operational and political foundation on peacebuilding and conflict prevention that laid the groundwork for the adoption of the dual resolutions in April 2016.[10] This history includes a range of UN reports that articulated, developed and influenced understanding and operationalisation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. A majority of interviewees contended that current understanding of and discussions on sustaining peace must be grounded in this rich normative, political and operational history to fully appreciate and build upon the advancements that have been made. The sustaining peace resolutions are a cumulative outcome of this body of work and a universal signal by the UN membership of its support for and legitimacy of the centrality of peacebuilding and sustaining peace within the UN. This history should be acknowledged and used to provide greater political weight for Member States and the wider UN system to move forward on delivery.

What do the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions call for?

Security Council Resolution 2282 and General Assembly Resolution 70/262 on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

In April 2016, the UN General Assembly and Security Council adopted milestone resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, a concept taken from the 2015 Advisory of Experts (AGE) Report[11] reviewing the UN's PBA. Within these resolutions, sustaining peace is described as a "goal and a process... which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development."[12] The resolutions call for a holistic approach that addresses root causes, works across the UN's three pillars and covers the spectrum of conflict prevention, mediation, management and resolution.

Recognising that sustaining peace is inherently political, the resolutions emphasise coherence and coordination between the main UN bodies, especially in analysis, policy and operations, while also ensuring inclusive national ownership, links to regional and sub-regional organisations and structural and operational partnerships for peacebuilding. The resolutions also notably call for strengthening the PBC so that it better fulfils its convening responsibility to improve coordination and plays its bridging role to connect the UN's various intergovernmental bodies. Encouraging more flexible working methods, the resolutions suggest that the PBC enhance its role in cross-cutting issues; further integrate gender perspectives in its work; and strengthen synergies with relevant actors, including the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)[13], the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, Member States, international financial institutions and civil society. Given the need to increase peacebuilding funding, the resolutions stress the importance of sustained and predictable financing of UN peacebuilding activities, and call for strengthened UN-World Bank cooperation to create enabling environments for economic growth and to marshal resources for sustaining peace. The resolutions also underscore the importance of meaningful and inclusive participation by women and youth, including in decision-making. Lastly, the resolutions call for a comprehensive review of the UN PBA at the General-Assembly's seventy-fourth session.

However, the research also brought forward emerging concerns from some Member States around the operational impact of sustaining peace. For instance, there are concerns that sustaining peace could: be misused as a possible avenue to undermine state sovereignty; lead to the securitisation or militarisation of development; or serve as a means for militarised responses in fragile or conflict-affected countries. These apprehensions in part stem from legitimate experiences. Additionally, such concerns arise as a result of the politicisation of certain issues by Member States as part of larger geopolitical dynamics at the UN. It is important to note that such alarms are not raised by Member States solely in regards to sustaining peace, but arise across a range of UN activities and agendas.

Efforts to implement policies and programmes to build sustainable peace must provide the needed space for contextualised planning to prevent the concept's misuse and politicisation. Furthermore, it is critical that action does not allow for securitised development programming in the name of sustaining peace, but rather allows for strengthened implementation, including by fostering greater sensitivity to conflict drivers, grievances and perceptions that may impact measures to uphold the 2030 Agenda. It is in this regard that the UN's PBA,

particularly the PBC, may be well placed as it provides platforms for discussion and policy development that is grounded in national ownership and inclusive of the views, expertise and experience of a range of UN, government, civil society and private sector actors.

In addition to the aforementioned emerging concerns regarding implementation, this research also shed light on a remaining conceptual disagreement, notably the question of the concept's scope. Since the adoption of the dual resolutions, there have been diverging perspectives on whether sustaining peace applies to all countries, or only to those affected by conflict and fragility. The authors of this report argue that by articulating sustaining peace in the resolutions' perambulatory paragraphs as a "goal and process...aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict,"[14] Member States have collectively expressed that peacebuilding must no longer be understood as solely a post-conflict enterprise, but rather as a central tenet for international peace throughout a conflict continuum. While recognising that the risk of conflict and fragility varies greatly, and thus there are states where greater immediate and long-term focus must be given (in line with the principle of "no one will be left behind"[15] as articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), no state is immune. All states should therefore adopt and implement measures to strengthen capacities for conflict prevention and resilience, which includes addressing root causes and drivers of conflict and fragility and ensuring national policies are aligned with this commitment.

Overall, Member States should be commended for universally articulating sustaining peace in the dual resolutions; however, stakeholders must continue to focus efforts on moving from rhetoric to practice throughout the UN, including at the regional and country levels. With the exception of a small number of situations, progress on institutionalising sustaining peace thus far has had limited impact, both at the Secretariat and regional and country levels, in terms of providing functional capacities required for a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach. The UN should begin by ensuring coordinated analysis and planning across its pillars; strengthening communication channels between the Secretariat and the field; and supporting a range of local actors in implementation, monitoring and evaluation and capacity building. Developments at

the country level, including in Liberia as detailed below, provide further opportunities for the UN and Member States to progress sustaining peace from strategic thinking to practical action.

Interviews with Member State and UN colleagues illustrated a strong desire to make this operational shift. To provide this support, Member States should consider adequately resourcing UN plans and programmes that demonstrate a coordinated approach; lending political support to UN senior leaders in the field operating in complex environments; and promoting national ownership over peacebuilding planning. The Secretary-General's proposed reforms,[16] if implemented, similarly aim to strengthen UN capacities to deliver on sustaining peace by strengthening the UN's PBA, removing artificial silos and empowering the field.

Building sustainable peace in Liberia

As noted in the AGE report, and seen in Burundi and the Central African Republic, the UN has a mixed track record in preventing violent relapses following withdrawals of multidimensional peace operations. Understanding the necessity of smoothly transitioning from larger UN presences s to smaller UN country teams (UNCT), the AGE report identified three main challenges: ensuring national ownership; sustained and predictable financing for peacebuilding; and coordinated action within the UN system.[17] Seeking to address these challenges, sustaining peace calls for greater coherence and communication between peace operations and UNCTs from the outset and continuing thereafter in order to ensure a peaceful transition and lay the groundwork for enduring peace. The UN is now presented with an opportunity to operationalise these recommendations in Liberia, which is seen by many as a key test case for sustaining peace given the 2018 closure of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the simultaneous political changes in the country.

Recent approaches to peacebuilding in Liberia appear to embody some of the key messages of the sustaining peace concept. This includes the Security Council's call in resolution 2333[18] for the Secretary-General to provide a peacebuilding plan — the first such call in the Council's history. The corresponding plan, "Sustaining Peace and Securing Development: Liberia Peacebuilding Plan"[19] was developed in consultation with a range of UN and non-UN actors, including the Government of Liberia (GoL), UNMIL, the PBC, international partners and civil society. A Reference Group, comprised of senior GoL stakeholders, the National Civil Society Council of Liberia, UNMIL, UNCT and the donor community guided the drafting process, drawing upon work of other relevant stakeholders, capacity mapping exercises and statements of mutual commitments to ensure coherency and inclusivity to other support streams. The peacebuilding plan is also organised in two phases: the first runs until the drawdown of UNMIL in March 2018, with the second focusing on longer-term peacebuilding priorities and development. This plan stands as a positive example of a multi-stakeholder approach that looks not only in the short-term, but also through the transition and post-UNMIL period.

However, this plan could have benefited from a longer timeframe for development to ensure a proper and inclusive consultation process and to have been better anchored in the other political frameworks, including the UN Development Assistance Framework. These lessons should be drawn from and incorporated moving forward in other country contexts.

In addition to the consultation process on the peacebuilding plan, relevant UN actors have worked together on other key issues facing Liberia. This includes a Security Council Presidential Statement in July 2017,[20] which was an outcome of a joint initiative by the United States, the Security Council penholder on Liberia, and Sweden, the Chair of the Liberia PBC Country-specific Configuration (CSC), which expresses support for the plan and encourages stakeholders to remain involved in addressing capacity gaps during the transition. Further, in November 2017, the PBC convened a meeting[21] that featured key UNMIL and government actors to discuss progress on implementing the peacebuilding plan and key political developments that could impact it. The work done so far in ensuring joint planning and analysis of the risk factors in Liberia both before, during and after the transition should help the GoL, UNCT and civil society traverse the initial shockwaves of funding and capacity drop-offs as UNMIL withdraws.

Liberia will continue to test the UN's ability to apply the sustaining peace concept during a critical period for the country's long-term stability. The international community, including the UN system, will need to provide continued and predictable attention and resources through this transition period and the years that follow. The sustained efforts of the PBC through the Liberia CSC will be especially important as it is uniquely positioned to convene actors working at the local, national, regional and international levels in order to provide analysis and identify challenges or gaps to sustainable peace. The PBC will also have a critical role in supporting UN efforts as its engagement continues to drawdown. Though more work remains, efforts have so far been viewed as a positive step in bringing together usually disparate parts of the UN system to ensure a coordinated approach to support long-term peace in Liberia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Sustaining peace should be understood as the culmination of years of work in the fields of peacebuilding and prevention, and Member States should continue to reaffirm their commitment to the twin resolutions. The adoption of the sustaining peace resolutions has ushered in an evolution at the UN that has been years in the making and informed by the work done by the UN, Member States, civil society and other key partners, who should continue to champion this next era.

2. Member States, with UN support, should move to operationalise sustaining peace, including at the regional and country levels, through a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach. To achieve this, contextualised inclusive exchanges on strategies, planning, implementation and monitoring must be carried out at UN Headquarters and at the regional and country levels on a regular basis. This approach will help ensure that the goal of sustaining peace remains at the core of all activities. The on-going UN reform processes may provide an avenue for supporting such approaches by strengthening the UN's PBA and ensuring it is well placed within the UN system to leverage support.

3 The Peacebuilding Commission: strengthening the UN's body for "sustained international attention" on sustaining peace

The PBC was established following the 2005 World Summit to provide the UN a means to support the peacebuilding needs and priorities of countries emerging from conflict, including by convening diverse stakeholders within and outside the UN system to support peace consolidation. The sustaining peace resolutions reaffirmed the role of the PBC as the central body to "bring sustained international attention to sustaining peace,"[22] and, as our research showed, sparked renewed attention to its work. As such, there may now be greater expectations for the PBC to more explicitly illustrate delivery of its mandate and show tangible impact.

The research for this report assessed the degree to which the sustaining peace resolutions have impacted the work by or perception of the PBC, and explored progress and challenges related to the PBC's efforts to implement its mandate. Specific focus was given to the PBC's role as an advisory and convening body, which included efforts to undertake inclusive approaches for peacebuilding and to implement flexible working methods. Conversations with UN and Member State colleagues stressed that when considering the PBC today, one needs to reflect both on recent work and challenges, as well as have a broader, holistic and institutional view to appreciate advancements that have been taken since its establishment.

Enhancing the PBC's convening power

The convening role of the PBC, and the flexibility that this involves, is the body's greatest asset and is what sets the PBC apart within the UN system. The authority given to the PBC[23] to bring diverse stakeholders together to support countries as they build peace must not be underestimated, and is premised on the understanding that peacebuilding requires inclusivity, partnerships and coordinated

and coherent approaches. There is a widespread Member State recognition of the PBC's unique role in providing a supportive platform particularly for country situations either never placed on the Security Council's agenda or those leaving it. It allows for formal and informal engagements with and political accompaniment of countries that would otherwise not have avenues for raising their peacebuilding concerns, needs and priorities. There is thus great support for the PBC to continue to provide opportunities for ad-hoc and sustained attention to, engagement with and activities for building peace in countries under its consideration.

Additionally, because of its convening power, the PBC can bring together key stakeholders inside and outside the UN for constructive discussion grounded in national ownership and inclusivity whether through ad-hoc discussions or CSCs. QUNO and GPPAC research found that Member States hold a profound acknowledgement of and appreciation for the PBC's convening role and its efforts to bring together various stakeholders, including from UN Headquarters and country offices, regional intergovernmental bodies and CSOs and networks. While not an operational body, the discussions convened within the PBC do have the potential to influence action on the ground by bridging initiatives and providing the opportunity for information sharing, updates and coordination on peacebuilding needs and priorities. There was also particular appreciation for meetings wherein actors at the country level, such as members of UN offices including UN Resident Coordinators (RCs), state government officials and civil society representatives, provide briefings to PBC members. Precisely because this on-the-ground perspective is often missing from New York, these meetings that link country level activities with policy debates at UN Headquarters were raised as examples of how the PBC should work.

Given these findings, further effort should be taken to build upon such approaches to increase and strengthen connections between the UN and relevant stakeholders, including peacebuilding practitioners, at the country, regional and international levels. While these connections with country and regional actors are welcomed, there is a greater need to analyse the impact that such engagement may have, both as it relates to policy developments at UN Headquarters and country level activities. The PBC membership could benefit from receiving greater

analysis on how its meetings directly support or impact the work carried out by UN colleagues on the ground. With the understanding that there may be political or operational sensitivities depending on the context or nature of the peacebuilding work being conducted, the PBC should consider compiling this analysis where possible. Such a reflective approach may provide insights that can improve understanding of the PBC's impact, and an opportunity to learn from and strengthen future efforts. Civil society actors may also be well placed to foster such analytical discussions outside of formal PBC meetings, which could help mitigate political sensitivities by providing a neutral space.

Additionally, research showed that many interviewees wanted the PBC to better utilise its role to cut across the UN's three pillars (peace and security, development and human rights) to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to peacebuilding. This was particularly raised when considering if and how the PBC can support countries in integrating human rights and development needs within the establishment of national peacebuilding programmes. Regarding human rights, it is important to note that the sustaining peace resolutions articulate the need for the PBC to consider the inclusion of national human rights institutions, as relevant, in its comprehensive approach to building sustainable peace.[24] By creating space that allows for holistic discussions on human rights, which include economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights, the PBC can further support countries to address drivers and triggers of conflict and strengthen human rights capacities, institutions and compliance at all levels.

With regards to development needs, numerous interviewees reaffirmed that a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace as carried out in the work of the PBC should seek to reinforce and align with national measures taken to implement the 2030 Agenda's goals and targets, including but also extending beyond Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Using its convening role, the PBC is uniquely placed to support the integration of cross-pillar integration within policy discussions and development of national peacebuilding priorities. For example, the PBC can continue to build upon past work to convene actors from across the UN system, such as from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) or the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

(OHCHR), and from those working at the country level, such as UN RCs. Such efforts would help ensure that sustaining peace and development are complimentary rather than competing goals.

Flexibility of working methods

Building on its past work, the PBC has sought to further develop its flexibility by increasingly convening meetings on a broader range of country, regional and thematic issues. Many interviewees commended the recent and on-going flexible approach of the PBC, particularly citing the ad-hoc meetings on countries not covered by CSCs, such as the Solomon Islands[25] or the Gambia.[26] These cases were seen to illustrate the value and impact of the PBC's flexibility by providing avenues for engagement on country situations at the government's request that could otherwise have been overlooked by other UN bodies.

Both the Solomon Islands and the Gambia approached the PBC to convene discussions grounded in national concerns, priorities and needs with a particular emphasis on challenges surrounding periods of uncertainty and transition. For the Solomon Islands, this was premised on the drawdown of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). With regards to the Gambia, the discussions centred on the democratic transition following the December 2016 elections and end of the 22-year rule of former President Yahya Jammeh. This public announcement of the desire to maintain or build peace in a country, and acknowledgment of the immediate and long-term difficulties that could stand in the way, should be commended as contributing towards decreasing the stigma that may be associated with coming before UN intergovernmental bodies. By independently approaching the PBC, these examples illustrate that countries increasingly see value in the body as a platform for discussion on and assistance with peacebuilding needs.

However, while this more open approach has been welcomed, it also poses challenges that should be considered as the PBC continues to develop its flexible working methods. The increased convening of ad-hoc meetings must not reduce the on-going attention and work of the CSCs or result in their replacement. Rather such meetings should serve as additional avenues for the PBC to uphold and strengthen its convening mandate. Holding frequent ad-hoc discussions on non-CSC countries risks the

PBC having one-off meetings, which may not meet the needs of countries in focus. This may be further compounded by the fact that, unlike the CSCs, there is no Member State leader supporting countries through a chair-like position, which is normally responsible for stewarding the PBC's work on the country and providing political accompaniment to the government as it develops and implements its peacebuilding plans. The PBC therefore needs to ensure that it balances its ad-hoc meetings with the realistic needs of non-CSC countries to ensure it can provide sustained support if and when called upon.

An increase in new country meetings may also adversely impact the capacity of PBC members to contribute to discussions and for PBSO to provide thorough contextualised analysis and support. In reality, many Member States' permanent missions have limited capacities, and as peacebuilding experts find themselves responsible for other thematic portfolios, they may struggle to consistently and meaningfully participate in the growing number and diversity of discussions. This is further compounded when there is limited national government exposure to or presence in countries that come before the PBC. While not alleviating these challenges, increasing communication about PBC meetings, including through advanced scheduling, may give its members greater opportunities for preparation. Strengthening opportunities for the PBC and PBSO to partner with and include civil society may also give Member States more critical context and analysis by connecting them with local and regional expertise and experience. Such partnership opportunities will also benefit from improved and advanced communication on the scheduling and focus of PBC meetings.

The informal appointments of PBC members to serve as Focal Points is an additional effort to increase flexibility, which was proposed in the annual report of the PBC's Tenth Session[31] and has since been developed as a preliminary measure. At the time of this research, the Focal Points included: gender (Canada and Bangladesh); financing (Norway and Indonesia); institution building (Japan); youth (Belgium); and national ownership (Russia). The Focal Points emerged as an initiative to welcome stronger engagement and leadership by the membership, as well as to strengthen the work of the PBC on thematic areas. It is important to note that the Tenth Session's Annual Report suggested Focal Points on sustainable development and peacebuilding, and engagement with civil society; however, PBC members took up neither issue.

PBC flexibility in action

In the last two years, the PBC has continued to expand its coverage to provide a platform for countries beyond those mandated in CSCs. This increasingly flexible approach has occurred in a number of situations, including at the country's request, such as the case of the Solomon Islands[27] and the Gambia,[28] and those countries receiving support from the PBF, as in the cases of Colombia[29] and Sri Lanka,[30] among others. Both types of meetings illustrate progress in the PBC's efforts to flexibly carry out its working methods, and also answers the call from Member States for increased coordination between the PBC and PBF; a point which was highlighted in the sustaining peace resolutions.

In 2017, for instance, both the Colombian and Sri Lankan governments agreed to brief the PBC on their peacebuilding plans, the lessons from their respective peace processes and their experiences working with the international community in implementing peacebuilding programmes. Along with involvement of multiple national authorities, these meetings included the participation of the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, senior officials from the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UN RCs and members of local CSOs. This cross-section of UN actors, national authorities and local CSOs contributing to peacebuilding highlights the convening power and unique advantage of the PBC. Further, it enabled the PBC membership to gain insight into the work of the PBF and other actors, both local and international, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of peacebuilding in these countries and ensure a coordinated approach by UN actors in support of national priorities. These meetings also provided space to discuss impediments to faster implementation of peacebuilding plans and provided contextual analysis and a multifaceted assessment of the political, economic and social climate of the countries. Many PBC members expressed support for these meetings as good examples for how the PBC should function in their convening capacity. Additionally, members requested that meetings between PBF recipient countries and the PBC continue to become more

regularised, and commended the opportunity they presented for South-South experience sharing.

The PBC should continue to build from these experiences in providing the space for countries receiving PBF funding, along with other technical support from UN offices, agencies, funds and programmes, to share their national priorities and for UN actors to ensure that support is aligned with these goals and coordinated with all relevant stakeholders. These briefings by PBF-recipient countries also allowed different countries in critical post-conflict periods to share lessons and practices with one another; this added benefit of creating space for learning should not be overlooked nor undervalued. While these meetings have been positively received at UN Headquarters, it is likely that they only skim the surface of the potential learning possibilities. Therefore, the PBC, in coordination with the countries in focus, should seek to deepen this experience sharing to ensure there is follow-up to sustain engagement and foster continual learning processes. The UN must also be sure that the coordination in New York flows down to the country level, and that the areas addressed in these meetings are more deeply unpacked with the relevant actors. The PBC should also share the analysis, experiences and insights discussed in these meetings with other relevant intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council, as relevant, to fulfil its advisory function.

Interviewees recognised that there have been efforts undertaken by the various Focal Points to support the PBC, including but not limited to the convening of the PBC membership for a discussion on the role of youth in peacebuilding,[32] as well as a meeting on gender inclusive transitions.[33] While there was appreciation for this work overall, research indicated that it is early in the process to truly determine the long-term impact of the Focal Points initiative. It was largely recommended by interviewees that the designation of Focal Points should mean that Member States take on a leadership role that contributes towards mainstreaming the issue(s) within *all* PBC meetings rather than create parallel tracks of work. However, the lack of clarity on how Focal Points should and could deliver on this responsibility must be considered when reflecting on the approaches undertaken by the informal appointees. While not seeking to formalise processes that are still in trial phases, the research showed that there is strong interest in further articulating the expectations of the Focal Point initiative and the capacity needed for this role. Additionally, it is critical to note that, if continued, the appointment of Focal Points must not diminish the universal responsibilities of PBC members to be committed to designated issues. Furthermore, it is critical that topics that were not explicitly "championed," such as sustainable development and civil society inclusion, are not overlooked in the work of the PBC.

Strengthening communication and institutional memory

The PBC, like other UN intergovernmental bodies, is impacted by institutional turnover, both in terms of its membership and the staffing of Member States' permanent missions to the UN. If effort is not taken on the part of a Member State or within the PBC to exchange information and provide background to new members, this can easily result in situations where PBC members and Member State peacebuilding experts are not sufficiently aware of the working methods and role of the PBC as well as its past and present challenges and successes. This research provided an opportunity to learn from many PBC members about how limited institutional knowledge personally impacts the representatives serving within this body, including diminishing their ability to successfully contribute to the work. Many recommended that greater avenues for learning about the PBC should be provided to incoming members and peacebuilding experts, both within Member States' permanent missions and the PBC.

In addition to the challenges of institutional memory, this research clearly uncovered a need for strengthened strategic communication of the PBC's work and its impact. Despite advancements in recent years to strengthen the convening, bridging and advisory roles and improve flexibility, understanding of these initiatives and their effect remains limited to those Member States, UN colleagues and CSOs most engaged at the PBC. Therefore, the PBC should seek to more effectively articulate its successes and challenges so that they are more widely known throughout the UN and the peacebuilding community. This outreach will serve the PBC in a number of ways, including by raising awareness of its role and work, improving coordination with other relevant actors and countering negative narratives that may exist about its relevance and impact. Improving communication will also serve to provide opportunities for continued learning and adjustment of the PBC's work, as well as illustrate and draw attention to peacebuilding policy and practice, as called for by the sustaining peace resolutions. While it is true that weak communication is an attribute applicable to many UN intergovernmental bodies, this should not relieve the PBC from the responsibility to assess and convey the PBC's effect. Ultimately, there should be an expectation on *all* UN bodies to continually evaluate and illustrate their impacts to their stakeholders and beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PBC members should consider strategies to engage in deeper and more regular analysis on how its work directly aligns with and impacts activities carried out at the regional and country levels by UN colleagues, national governments and local CSOs. While this may be politically sensitive depending on the context or nature of work, the PBC's membership should consider providing forums for undertaking and sharing such analysis to improve understanding of its impact, as well as opportunity to learn from and strengthen future efforts. Such discussions may be relevant for PBC meetings or for informal discussions outside of the PBC. Civil society actors may be well placed to support, convene and foster such analysis and discussions. This may also involve the development or strengthening of monitoring and evaluation processes that can assess the PBC's impact. The PBSO or civil society actors may be suited to undertake such efforts.

2. The continued convening of ad-hoc meetings must not replace the on-going work of the CSCs, which should continue, as needed, to provide political accompaniment to and strengthen capacities of countries based on contextualised, nationally-owned peacebuilding needs and priorities.

3. Non-CSC meetings of the PBC must be carried out in a manner that meets the needs of the country in focus, which may require sustained attention and peacebuilding support. There is a risk that in taking on many new country discussions, the PBC could resort to one-off meetings that may not support on-going efforts for the country in focus, and result in a weakened impact. This may be further compounded by the lack of a Chair-like position dedicated to maintain momentum and provide political accompaniment.

4. The PBC may benefit by providing further clarity on the expectations of Focal Points and the capacity needed to fulfil this role. Furthermore, the designation of Focal Points must not diminish the universal responsibilities of PBC members to be dedicated to the designated thematic issues. It is key that topics not explicitly "championed," such as sustainable development and civil society inclusion, are not overlooked. The Member State serving as PBC Chair could use its role to ensure sufficient commitment to all thematic issues.

5. The PBC should support and undertake initiatives that strengthen and institutionalise knowledge of its working methods and impact, particularly as there is consistent turnover in its membership and within Member States' permanent missions. This could include convening inductions and fostering greater opportunity for informal and interactive reflective meetings. Civil society can be instrumental in supporting such initiatives, including through partnership and facilitation of these activities.

6. The PBC should ensure that there is increased communication about, early scheduling of and reporting on its meetings, thus providing its members, relevant external participants and CSOs greater opportunity to impact discussions. This will also help create greater awareness about the PBC among a broader constituency inside and outside of New York.

7. The PBC, PBSO and CSOs should continue to develop methodologies for analysing and communicating the PBC's progress, challenges and impact on peace within countries discussed before the PBC. This may help effectively tailor the PBC's work and illustrate its relevance and value.

4 Lasting peace requires inclusivity and partnership

Experience has shown that non-inclusive peacebuilding approaches lack a holistic analysis of the situational environment, may be considered illegitimate by segments of society and ultimately risk leaving the drivers of fragility and conflict unaddressed. Recognising that these types of approaches can contribute towards continuing cycles of instability and violence, the sustaining peace resolutions note that the "scale and nature"[35] of sustaining peace requires commitment to inclusive partnerships to ensure coordinated and cooperative approaches to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. By incorporating explicit language in these resolutions supporting both national ownership[36] and civil society participation, including women's and youth groups, Member States universally affirmed and articulated the important role both play.

The interview process for this report explored the understanding of inclusive peacebuilding approaches and practical development of structural and operational partnerships with civil society. This included broader reflections on inclusivity, and explicit attention to how the UN's PBA, notably the PBC and PBF, engages with civil society. It was found that despite Member State rhetorical support for inclusive peacebuilding, a large gap still remains in ensuring its implementation.

Gaps between rhetoric and action

This research found substantial appreciation by Member States for the sustaining peace resolutions' emphasis on the inclusion of and structural and operational partnerships with civil society. Many interviewees signalled their support and gratitude for civil society peacebuilding contributions, with some noting that civil society actors and movements drove many changes for peace both at the UN and throughout the world. It was noted that the resolutions' language has the potential for increasing entry points for coordination and collaboration between CSOs, the UN and its membership, and that such work will be essential to build sustainable peace in any context.

However, commitment to civil society appears largely rhetorical based on interviewee responses. When asked to share concrete examples of inclusivity, partnerships or civil society impact on the PBC's work, it was evident that there is limited practical

"Reaffirms the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, whereby the responsibility for sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders and underlines the importance, in this regard, of inclusivity in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account."[34]

understanding of these issues. This should not be taken to imply that such examples do not exist, or that Member States' permanent missions are not supportive of civil society inclusion. Rather, it points to a knowledge deficit that may be the result of limited personal experience or capacities that may then be compounded by institutional turnover, and the degree, impact and resonance of efforts to amplify civil society. It also emerged that the vast majority of interviewees placed responsibility on civil society for identifying and accessing entry points for engagement with the UN and its membership. This illustrates an understanding of partnership and inclusivity that is premised on unequal relationships, with some colleagues not attributing individual responsibility for relationship-building and strategic thinking for inclusivity. It also shows a lack of awareness of the hurdles CSOs face when trying to approach an organisation as large and byzantine as the UN. It is necessary to shift the mind-set and expand ownership of this engagement - partnerships require actions and leadership by all. The PBC and Member States in particular need to dedicate greater practical, impact-driven attention to developing and promoting inclusive peacebuilding approaches and to creating and strengthening partnerships.

It should also be noted that some interviewees, despite theoretically recognising the importance of inclusivity and partnerships, voiced concerns about or scepticism of working with CSOs, including engaging with potentially politically-sensitive sectors such as human rights. This aversion may be a result of considering some topics as inherently more "confrontational" to governments, or stem

from conservative understandings of national ownership, which place the role of government as the central, if not only, voice for citizens or communities. Additionally, some interviewees stated that the breadth of civil society diversity poses challenges to their efforts when building partnerships and inclusion. Member State questions included who to approach, how to reach a broad range of CSOs and how to constructively manage various viewpoints and experiences.

While civil society diversity can make peacebuilding delivery more challenging, it cannot be an excuse for restraining outreach, justifying exclusion or accepting cooperation with organisations only working in capitals as sufficient. Instead, there must be greater practical recognition that sustained civil society engagement premised on equal and inclusive partnerships is critical for sustainable peace. This includes the need for conflict sensitive engagement with diverse civil society actors, including those with potentially polarising perspectives. The UN need not start from scratch; in many countries and regions, CSO networks already exist and the UN (including the PBC, PBSO and Member States) should work with these networks to ensure broad swaths of civil society are represented.

Civil society actors are often already playing a range of key roles in conflict-affected societies, and particularly in situations of transition or extreme fragility, may be the primary peacebuilding agents. Such actors and organisations must be recognised as a central part of the fabric that builds societal resilience, and their work, and the space that allows for it, must be upheld and supported. It is critical to recognise that the presence of robust and active civil society is typically a strong indicator for a society's capacity for sustaining peace. It should be better internalised that partnerships with civil society allow for the inclusion of local and contextualised perspectives and knowledge, including in the areas of analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of the approaches and activities needed for preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. Additionally, CSOs often possess localised expertise and institutional knowledge acquired from long-term engagement in a community or country that may often be missing from regional and international policy development and implementation. Such contributions enable international actors to support and strengthen the capacities of local and national governments and

intergovernmental bodies to sustain peacebuilding activities in the long-term.

It is therefore essential that politics is not used as a vehicle to silence civil society. Civil society faces increasing restrictions throughout the world, both through legal and illegal means of oppression. This ever-growing crackdown is hindering or halting the work of organisations and individual activists, and risks breaking down the social fabric needed for building sustainable peace and resilience. It is essential that free and open space is maintained to allow for the flourishing of a vibrant civil society. The PBC and its membership can play a significant role in this endeavour by using its platform to voice support for these actors and their work, and to support the protection of space for civil society.

It is also important to recognise that the challenges of implementing inclusive peacebuilding are not confined solely to the UN. The broader peacebuilding community struggles at times to illustrate how inclusivity works best in practice. Therefore, all actors in the peacebuilding field, including UN, state governments and civil society, must collectively showcase what this operationally means and develop best practices from such experiences. This research highlighted a need to provide opportunities to learn across experiences on developing and implementing inclusive peace processes and peacebuilding programming. Thus, more efforts should be undertaken to convene informal platforms to foster such honest and creative exchanges and learning opportunities to articulate, strengthen understanding and amplify examples of inclusivity at work. The best practices uncovered during these sessions should then be built into all future programming.

"Underlines that the scale and nature of the challenge of sustaining peace can be met through close strategic and operational partnerships between national governments, the United Nations, and other key stakeholders, including...civil society organisations, women's groups, youth organisations."[37]

Civil society participation in the PBC

The PBC has increased its efforts to include civil society representatives as participants, however this outreach remains uneven. For example, interviewees highlighted that some CSC Chairs initiated meetings with civil society before and during country visits, and invited their participation in relevant meetings. For example, CSC meetings, such as those on Sierra Leone[38] and Guinea-Bissau,[39] ad-hoc country discussions, including on the Solomon Islands,[40] Colombia[41] and Sri Lanka,[42] and the 2017 PBC annual session[43] are examples of the PBC's efforts to include peacebuilding practitioners to share their perspectives and expertise. However, interviewees also believed these incidents were the result of individual Member State's commitment with the support of PBSO, rather than institutionalised approaches. While this leadership by a few is welcome, greater effort is needed to systematise civil society participation. These findings are similar to those from GPPAC and QUNO's 2015 report, *Filling the Gap: How civil society engagement can help the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture meet its purpose*, underscoring that civil society inclusion is not yet meaningfully or consistently approached within the PBC. As such, our organisations have included recommendations from this report which remain relevant today at the end of this section. They include strengthening communication; increasing the number of civil society representatives; and developing feedback loops at the country level through dedicated mechanisms for exchange.

Increasing civil society inclusion will greatly benefit the PBC as local actors undertake impactful activities in the immediate crisis and also possess a long-term commitment to sustain peacebuilding efforts after a UN presence shrinks. For instance, a civil society representative from Guinea-Bissau who briefed at the Ambassadorial-level meeting in August 2017[44] shared the experience of the network she represented in convening dialogues with major actors in the political crisis. This work enabled successful dialogues amongst stakeholders that contributed towards building pathways for resolution of the current situation. It further developed the capacity of local women mediators to play active roles in resolving and preventing conflict, who will remain on the ground and can be engaged with in the long-term. Local actors who are implementing programmes at the country level can also reveal issues that may be otherwise overlooked.

For instance, during the November 2017 briefing on Colombia,[45] civil society actors agreed with positive assessments that there is a cultural and mental shift underway in rural communities to move away from violence and towards understanding the benefits of peace. However, they also warned that spoilers continue to threaten this trend in communities and called for more tangible peace dividends in order to convince sceptics. By providing localised analysis, these briefings bolster the PBC's capacity to gain a more nuanced contextual understanding, which can enhance its ability to advise the Security Council as relevant and envisioned in its mandate.

While the PBC should see these meetings as positive steps forward, they also illustrate the challenges that are encountered with regards to civil society inclusion. There is little to no opportunity for the PBC membership to assess and understand how CSO participation influences policy discussions and developments at the UN, or to hear from CSO briefers on how their organisations view the work of and engagement with the PBC. This risks creating an environment where organisations are included in order to "tick the box," rather than as meaningful contributors to a longer-term process - a challenge that is certainly not unique to the PBC. Further thinking should be dedicated to creating feedback loops with the civil society representatives that participate as briefers. For instance, the CSC Chair should ensure they remain in contact with the briefer thereafter on specific issues raised in the briefing and ensure that the CSO is consulted on field visits. If UN RCs or other country-based UN officials are present, they could also reach out to the CSO to engage on follow-up actions to address concerns raised.

Gender-inclusive peacebuilding: widely supported, poorly understood

The report of the PBC's Eighth Session[46] called for the creation of a gender strategy to "systematically mainstream a gender-perspective in all its work." In response, "The Peacebuilding Commission's Gender Strategy"[47] was adopted in 2016, and articulated guiding principles and strategic actions for the PBC to undertake to ensure that gender is mainstreamed and that peacebuilding policy and discussions are gender-responsive. With the adoption of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions, all Member States reaffirmed the critical role of women in peacebuilding and called for increased action to ensure their full and equal inclusion. The resolutions also reaffirmed the PBC's efforts to integrate a gender perspective; called for close strategic and operational partnerships with women's organisations; underscored the importance of women's leadership and participation; called for the promotion of gender dimensions of peacebuilding; and stressed the need to mobilise resources for addressing women's peacebuilding needs.

This research illustrated that at the conceptual and normative levels, there is widespread recognition that gender equality must not just be a goal in and of itself, but must be an essential component of building and strengthening peaceful and equitable societies. The affirmation of the centrality of the full and equal participation of women and girls was largely grounded in the understanding of such participation as an inherent right, that sustainable peace must be built on equal and holistic policy development and implementation and that in so doing, the UN is upholding long-standing responsibilities articulated in normative and legal human rights and gender equality frameworks.

However, research showed that there is limited understanding of how the PBC Gender Strategy is translated from paper to practice. While the Gender Strategy notes that "the whole PBC should play an active role in the implementation,"[48] it is apparent that there is first a need to enhance awareness of and sensitisation to it given that there is currently minimal awareness of this document within its membership. Then, the PBC must work towards actualising it. The development of strategies must not be viewed as outcomes in themselves, but rather the means towards the larger and more impactful goal of creating and implementing policies and programmes that: fully understand how conflict affects women and girls differently; allocate capacity for and take approaches that address these unique needs; and ensure the full and equal participation of women and girls in the development and implementation of all peacebuilding activities.

There can be avenues for further sensitising the PBC membership to the Gender Strategy through the continued convening of thematic PBC meetings to meaningfully engage and report on the issue. These thematic meetings, such as the one held on gender-responsive peacekeeping transitions in January 2018,[49] could also serve as opportunities for the PBC to hold itself accountable for fulfilling its Gender Strategy. The PBC could also increase its use of its convening power to bring together relevant actors both within and outside the UN to consider practical examples and modalities for gender-inclusive peacebuilding. While the PBC's membership must play an active role and take ownership in implementing the Gender Strategy, the Focal Points on gender can continue their work to support the PBC Chair and membership in mainstreaming gender by advocating that the full membership uphold its responsibility with regards to the Strategy's implementation. For example, ahead of and during all PBC meetings it can be asked if and how the Gender Strategy checklist was used to inform the meeting preparations, what the impact was and what challenges were encountered. This can support further institutionalising the Gender Strategy and, through the annual reporting process of the PBC, provide an avenue for accountability.

Despite the challenges facing the institutionalisation of the PBC's Gender Strategy within the overall work of this body, specific PBC meetings were raised as good efforts to include the perspectives and expertise of women's

organisations as they relate to building sustainable peace. For example, interviewees cited the June 2017 informal meeting on the Solomon Islands,[50] which included a representative of the Young Women's Parliamentary Group, as an opportunity to illustrate that maintaining peace gains during and following transitions requires the direct and equal participation of women and girls. Another meeting cited was the August CSC meeting on Guinea-Bissau,[51] where representatives from the women's facilitation group, a platform of representatives from 10 women's CSOs, briefed the PBC on their work to facilitate dialogue amongst the implementers of the 2016 Conakry Agreement, and the partnership with the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) that supported their efforts. As a result, the PBC heard first-hand about how women's organisations and leaders, through partnership with the UN at the country level, were working to create the space needed to support longer-term processes for resolving the country's political impasse. Such inclusion of women's perspectives and practitioner expertise within PBC meetings should be applauded but, as noted in other sections of this report, greater efforts need to be taken to truly institutionalise such perspectives and ensure meaningful inclusion of practitioner expertise.

In addition to specific meetings, interviewees highlighted positive instances of work by some CSC Chairs and countries that have led by example with regards to promoting and implementing gender-inclusive peacebuilding. It was noted that, when preparing for in-country visits, some Chairs request briefings with UN Women ahead of travelling, and work to ensure that their trips include meetings with relevant UN staff working on gender and peacebuilding, and women's CSOs contributing to peace in the country. Such leadership should be further amplified, and the opportunity should be provided to learn across CSC Chair and country experiences with regards to gender inclusive and responsive peacebuilding approaches; this knowledge should then be used by the PBC members to advise countries in transition and infuse development of other peacebuilding plans and activities. The PBC should consider having informal meetings to provide such an exchange, either within its auspices or in other informal settings, such as through working with CSOs that can support the convening of such discussions.

Funding civil society peacebuilding through the PBF

Our 2015 *Filling the Gap* report recommended that the PBF "proceed with directly funding international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) based on its 2014-2016 business plan, including pre-qualifying INGO partners who can re-grant to smaller peacebuilding actors."[52] Since that report, the PBF has implemented two funding cycles through the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI)[53] in which CSOs were able to apply and receive direct funding for work carried out in eligible countries. Grants awarded also required that 40 per cent of funding be allocated to local partner organisations, an effort by the PBF to strengthen the capacity and initiatives of domestic peacebuilding organisations. This research found that there is limited knowledge amongst Member States of the positive efforts undertaken by the PBF to support civil society peacebuilding, with most respondents showing a lack of awareness that such funding had occurred. This knowledge gap needs to be addressed, with effort taken to better communicate the support to and outputs of civil society peacebuilding programming. By amplifying the PBF's partnership with civil society through direct funding opportunities, the Fund can contribute towards increasing understanding of the role and impact of civil society in building sustainable peace, as well as assist in illustrating what peacebuilding looks like in practice. In countries on the PBC's agenda, greater attention should be given to civil society initiatives supported by the PBF, including by providing opportunities for grant recipients to brief the PBC as relevant, as these actors and the work they are conducting may prove highly influential in terms of impact on the ground and for providing input into PBC discussions.

Additionally, efforts should be taken to institutionalise and diversify direct CSO funding. Presently, CSO funding applications are only welcomed under the GYPI, and only for CSO projects in the countries included in each initiative. As the GYPI is an annual process, direct funding for civil society is contingent on the maintenance of these initiatives; if the initiatives are halted, then so too are the funding opportunities for civil society. The PBF should remain a fund to support the peacebuilding needs of eligible countries, and sustained funding to civil society for output driven and impactful peacebuilding programming should be viewed as an avenue to support that goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On inclusion and partnerships broadly

1. When engaging with diverse civil society actors, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, UN and Member State representatives must undertake conflict sensitive outreach. By engaging in a conflict sensitive way with diverse civil society actors, including those with potentially polarising perspectives, the UN and its membership can contribute to upholding inclusive national ownership, providing a space for grievances to be discussed and potentially addressed, and ensuring that the most vulnerable segments of the population are heard.

2. The UN and Member States should ensure regular and meaningful interaction with civil society at local, country, regional and international levels to ensure their expertise is incorporated.

3. The UN and Member States should develop and/or strengthen information sharing at all levels including between country settings, embassies, capitals and the UN Secretariat.

4. The UN and Member States must work to create and protect civil society space. It is critical that space and freedoms for civil society to operate openly and freely be provided, guaranteed and reinforced. Political actors, such as the UN and national governments, must help ensure that free and open spaces for civil society are safeguarded as a central part of building sustainable peace and should provide the support necessary to strengthen civil society space and capacities, as appropriate, under their mandates. This can be done through: increasing or strengthening direct trainings and partnerships in mission and non-mission settings; supporting platforms for the exchange of best practices amongst civil society practitioners working across sectors and borders; leading by example in its inclusive culture and practice; and introducing civil society to external actors and supporting them in this process.

On improving the relationship with the PBA

5. PBC members should directly consult with civil society, including women and youth, as well as PBF recipients, facilitate their participation in meetings in New York and establish opportunities for regular engagement at the country level. This will help inform and contextualise PBC discussions, increase awareness and understanding of PBF support for civil society and strengthen knowledge of the role and impact of civil society in building sustainable peace.

6. PBC members, with the support of PBSO and in consultation with CSOs, should reflect on how it can create feedback loops with civil society, including with those representatives that participate as briefers. Already existing methodologies for this engagement should be made systematic and strengthened in order to increase effectiveness.

7. Information about PBC meetings and country visits (both before and after) should be communicated to civil society actors in an accessible manner and well in advance.

8. The PBC should include civil society expertise when developing and implementing methodologies for monitoring and evaluation.

9. The PBF should continue to directly fund civil society and undertake measures to institutionalise and diversify avenues for direct funding, including by extending funding beyond the GYPI.

10. The PBF should continue to engage with civil society, both through meetings in New York and at the country level. This will contribute towards feedback and monitoring of past funding calls, assessment of the implementation of PBF-funded projects by various UN agencies and support outreach and information sharing ahead of future funding opportunities.

5 Building peace requires overcoming fragmentation

Sustaining peace calls for improved coordination among all actors at the international, regional and country levels. However, as presented in the AGE report as well as other assessments of peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that barriers to cooperation are removed has proven difficult despite recognition of its importance. Silos persist across the community of peacebuilding practice, including within the UN, Member States and civil society. The internal fragmentation within each of these groups then makes cooperation between them more difficult. While it is equally important to explore the unique difficulties facing all peacebuilding actors in this regard, given both the scope of this report and current reform processes under Secretary-General Guterres[54], this report's research largely focused on Member States' permanent missions.

Many interviewees believe that siloed approaches restrict information exchange and collaboration with fellow diplomats working on other pillars of the UN's work, which results in challenges for moving forward sustaining peace and other crosscutting issues. Sustaining peace, which seeks to support peace efforts throughout the entire risk and conflict cycle, requires offices and departments both within the UN and Member States' permanent missions to

have the requisite channels and structures in place to support cross-sector strategic engagement and collaboration. By providing avenues for discussion and partnership amongst those working on the development, human rights and peace and security pillars, thematic experts can better understand the other issues and their critical interlinkages. These avenues could include regular cross-pillar team meetings or designated positions within missions that are responsible for ensuring coordination. Additionally, such initiatives could provide opportunities for Member States to identify and develop integrated strategies and work plans, including during times of transition, for taking sustaining peace efforts forward. Senior officials within permanent missions should lead by example and engage with a wide range of stakeholders and provide the necessary accountability and resources to ensure a more coordinated and holistic approach is taken. Enacting some of these measures will illustrate that sustaining peace is not merely a matter for peace and security, but rather one that must flow through the entire UN system and Member States' work.

This is a complex matter to address and will require approaches that meet the capacities and needs of

the permanent missions and their personnel. To support such efforts, Member States should consider providing informal platforms for the sharing of approaches and challenges for addressing the persistent issue of fragmentation. Such avenues would provide cross-learning opportunities that can support strengthened efforts to push sustaining peace forward, while also contributing towards enhancing overall Member State mission efficiency. Though this report provides specific recommendations for Member States, it should be acknowledged that removing barriers for peacebuilding must extend far beyond the UN to affect the culture and working methods of the broader community of practice working on building sustainable peace.
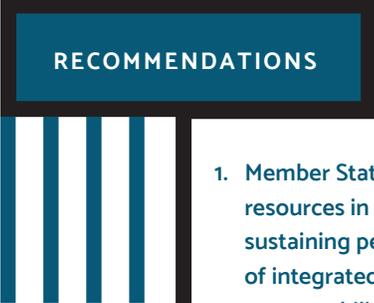
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Member States' permanent missions must develop or strengthen the channels, structures and resources in place to support cross-sector strategic engagement and collaboration, including on sustaining peace. To support such efforts, Member States should provide avenues for the development of integrated strategies for building sustainable peace, provide the necessary resources and accountability measures and consider using informal platforms for the sharing of approaches and challenges for addressing the persistent issue of fragmentation.

Sustaining peace: looking forward

6

It must be acknowledged that the recommendations included in this report are proposed during a time of dynamic change that could significantly impact the way in which the UN works. This includes a new focus on prevention from the Secretary-General, significant reform proposals in the areas of peace and security, development and management systems, and the concurrent publication of the Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The proposals contained within these UN processes aim to strengthen its ability to deliver in a holistic and comprehensive manner across the spectrum of a conflict cycle in order to have greater impact on the ground. These plans also attempt to address some of the challenges and gaps identified in this report, including around improving partnerships and engagement with civil society actors. For instance, proposals to bolster the PBC and PBSO could enable the UN to better institutionalise CSO inclusion, enhance the PBC's monitoring and evaluation capacities and bolster its strategic communication and working methods, ultimately strengthening its ability to deliver on its mandate. Further, the calls for the development of CSO engagement strategies and dedicated staff in the field may help the UN at regional and country levels reach beyond the 'usual suspects' to engage more deeply and broadly with CSOs playing critical roles in the sustaining peace process.

Despite the potential these changes have to make the UN better fit for purpose, they will only be as successful as the political support Member States provide to them. Further, sustaining peace is a goal and a process that will ultimately require dedicated commitment by Member States as those primarily responsible for "identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace."[55] In exercising this responsibility, it is critical to recall the commitment all Member States made to the centrality of inclusivity in "advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives"[56] to ensure that "the needs of all"[57] inform and influence the building of peace. The ultimate outcome of the various UN processes will likely not be realised for many years, but they do have the potential to fundamentally fortify the UN's ability to implement sustaining peace and the Sustainable Development Goals. As does much else on the UN agenda, however, these reforms will require effective partnerships in order to fulfil their objectives.

ANNEX: RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Sustaining peace: building on the past to move peacebuilding forward

1. Sustaining peace should be understood as the culmination of years of work in the fields of peacebuilding and prevention, and Member States should continue to reaffirm their commitment to the twin resolutions.

2. Member States, with UN support, should move to operationalise sustaining peace, including at the regional and country levels, through a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach.

II. The Peacebuilding Commission: strengthening the UN's body for "sustained international attention" on sustaining peace

3. PBC members should consider strategies to engage in deeper and more regular analysis on how its work directly aligns with and impacts activities carried out at the regional and country levels by UN colleagues, national governments and local CSOs.

4. The continued convening of ad-hoc meetings must not replace the on-going work of the CSCs, which should continue, as needed, to provide political accompaniment to and strengthen capacities of countries based on contextualised, nationally-owned peacebuilding needs and priorities.

5. Non-CSC meetings of the PBC must be carried out in a manner that meets the needs of the country in focus, which may require sustained attention and peacebuilding support.

6. The PBC may benefit by providing further clarity on the expectations of Focal Points and the capacity needed to fulfil this role.

7. The PBC should support and undertake initiatives that strengthen and institutionalise knowledge of its working methods and impact, particularly as there is consistent turnover in its membership and within Member States' permanent missions.

8. The PBC should ensure that there is increased communication about, early scheduling of and reporting on its meetings, thus providing its members, relevant external participants and CSOs greater opportunity to impact discussions.

9. The PBC, PBSO and CSOs should continue to develop methodologies for analysing and communicating the PBC's progress, challenges and impact on peace within countries discussed before the PBC.

III. Lasting peace requires inclusivity and partnerships

On inclusion and partnerships broadly

10. When engaging with diverse civil society actors, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings, UN and Member State representatives must undertake conflict sensitive outreach.
11. The UN and Member States should ensure regular and meaningful interaction with civil society at local, country, regional and international levels to ensure their expertise is incorporated.
12. The UN and Member States should develop and/or strengthen information sharing at all levels including between country settings, embassies, capitals and the UN Secretariat.
13. The UN and Member States must work to create and protect civil society space.

On improving the relationship with the PBA

14. PBC members should directly consult with civil society, including women and youth, as well as PBF recipients, facilitate their participation in meetings in New York and establish opportunities for regular engagement at the country level.
15. PBC members, with the support of PBSO and in consultation with CSOs, should reflect on how it can create feedback loops with civil society, including with those representatives that participate as briefers.
16. Information about PBC meetings and country visits (both before and after) should be communicated to civil society actors in an accessible manner and well in advance.
17. The PBC should include civil society expertise when developing and implementing methodologies for monitoring and evaluation.
18. The PBF should continue to directly fund civil society and undertake measures to institutionalise and diversify avenues for direct funding, including by extending funding beyond the GYPI.
19. The PBF should continue to engage with civil society, both through meetings in New York and at the country level.

IV. Building peace requires overcoming fragmentation

20. Member States' permanent missions must develop or strengthen the channels, structures and resources in place to support cross-sector strategic engagement and collaboration, including on sustaining peace.

ENDNOTES

1   General Assembly resolution, A/Res/70/262 (27 April 2016), available from undocs.org/a/res/70/262; Security Council resolution 2282 (April 27 2016), available from https://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2016.shtml.

2   See United Nations, General Assembly, *An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, a report of the Secretary-General,* A/47/277 -S/24111 (17 June 1992), available from undocs.org/a/47/227.

3   See United Nations, General Assembly, *A More Secured World: our shared responsibility, a report of the High-Level panel on threats, challenges, and change,* A/59/565 (2 December 2004), available from undocs.org/a/59/565.

4   See United Nations, General Assembly, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General,* A/59/2005 (21 March 2005), available from undocs.org/a/59/2005.

5   See United Nations, General Assembly, *Prevention of Armed Conflict, report of the Secretary-General,* A/55/985 (7 June 2001), available from undocs.org/a/55/985.

6   In 2015, three high-level review processes were undertaken and they focused on: peace operations; on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture; and on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The High-Level Panel on Peace Operations published the report, *Uniting our Strengths for Peace — Politics, Partnership and People,* on 16 June 2015. http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf. The Advisory Group of Experts responsible for the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture published the report, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace,* on 29 June 2015. http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/150630%20Report%20of%20the%20AGE%20on%20the%202015%20Peacebuilding%20 Review%20FINAL.pdf The Global Study on UN Security Council resolution 1325 culminated in the publication of the report, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace,* in 2015. http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/ highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf.

7   See United Nations, General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development,* A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015), available from http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1.

8   See UN News Centre, *António Guterres appointed next UN Secretary-General by acclamation* (13 October 2016), available from http://www. un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55285#.Wn3M_ujwaUk.

9   See António Guterres, *Vision Statement,* available from http://www.antonioguterres.gov.pt/vision-statement/.

10   See Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict & Quaker United Nations Office, *Filling the Gap: how civil society engagement can help the UN's PBA meet its purpose* (April 2015) for further information. http://quno.org/sites/default/files/timeline/files/2015/Filling%20the%20Gap.pdf

11   See United Nations, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture* (29 June 2015), available from http://www.refworld.org/docid/5724aae44.html.

12   *Supra,* note 1.

13   The PBF is a voluntary multi-donor trust fund of the UN Secretary-General providing catalytic, short-term funding to eligible countries, including those on the PBC's agenda. See betterpeace.org to learn more.

14   *Supra,* note 1.

15   *Supra,* note 7.

16   At the time of this project, reform initiatives were underway dedicated to three areas: peace and security, development and management. These reforms are intended to impact the UN's effectiveness by restructuring and refocusing the UN to make it more fit for purpose. Proposals include, for instance, realigning offices and departments to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure coherence on crosscutting issues; empowering field offices and leaders to make the UN more field-focused; and strengthening accountability measures. While the actual impact on the UN's working methods remains to be seen, it is hoped that these reforms will contribute towards a UN system that is better capacitated to manage the challenges it faces and deliver enhanced results.

17   *Supra,* note 11. (AGE)

18   See United Nations, Security Council, S/RES/2333 (23 December 2016), available from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc. asp?symbol=S/RES/2333(2016).

19   See United Nations, Security Council, *Letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council,* S/2017/282 (4 April 2017), available from http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/040417%20SG%20letter%20of%204%20April%20 (Liberia).pdf.

20   See United Nations, Security Council, *Security Council Presidential Statement,* S/PRST/2017/11 (24 July 2017), available from http://www. securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2017_11.pdf.

21   See Together for a Better Peace, *PBC Ambassadorial Level Meeting: Liberia* (21 November 2017), available from http://www.peaceportal. org/documents/131696911/131809183/PBC+Ambassador-Level+Meeting+-+Liberia+%28Open%29%20-+21+November+2017/f4607807- 0710-4730-897f-932f7624e695.

22   *Supra,* note 1, para 4a.

23   See United Nations, General Assembly, A/RES/60/180 (30 December 2005), available from undocs.org/a/res/60/180; Security Council, S/ RES/1645 (20 December 2005), available from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1645%20(2005).

24   *Supra,* note 1, para 4d.

25   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Peacebuilding Commission informal meeting on the Solomon Islands* (7 June 2017), available from https://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/PBC%20Solomon%20Islands%20Chair's%20summary%20-%20 FINAL.pdf.

26   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Peacebuilding Commission informal meeting on the situation in The Gambia* (19 April

2017), available from https://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/PBC%20Solomon%20Islands%20Chair's%20summary%20-%20 FINAL.pdf.

27   *Supra*, note 25.

28   *Supra,* note 26.

29   See Together for a Better Peace, *PBC Ambassador-level Meeting on Colombia: peacebuilding in Colombia* (13 November 2017), available from http://www.peaceportal.org/documents/131696911/131809183/PBC+Ambassador-level+Meeting+on+Colombia+-+Peacebuilding+in+Colombia+%28Open%29%20-+13+November+2017/34cc4fa8-9723-41ed-990d-cfe3cf3f3aeb.

30   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Peacebuilding Commission informal meeting on Sri Lanka* (20 November 2017), available from https://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/20171120_PBC%20Chair's%20Summary%20of%20Meeting%20on%20Sri%20 Lanka.pdf.

31   See United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Peacebuilding Commission,* A/71/768 (27 January 2017), available from undocs. org/A/71/768.

32   See Together for a Better Peace, *PBC expert-level meeting on youth conference* (15 June 2017), available from http://www.peaceportal.org/ar/web/together-for-a-better-peace/home/-/asset_publisher/GrvQdO3hI0JC/content/peacebuilding-commission-pbc-expert-level-meeting-on-youth-conference-15-june-2017.

33   At the time of writing this report there was not yet an online summary of this open meeting. See the Peacebuilding Commission for future outputs, http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/.

34   *Supra,* note 1, para 1.

35   *Supra,* note 1.

36   As our organisations previously noted in our 2015 report, *Filling the Gap*, "national ownership is the result of a process that has touched or involved the whole of society, especially when a country is in transition from a state of conflict or a government has won heavily contested elections."

37   *Supra,* note 1, para 18.

38   See Together for a Better Peace, *PBC Organizational Committee Informal Meeting* (7 September 2016) available from http://www.peaceportal.org/documents/131696911/131809183/PBC+10th+Session+Informal+Meeting+2016/aecb0f12-20b6-47f9-8930-c1ef43603bfb?version=1.0.

39   See Together for a Better Peace, *PBC Ambassadorial Level Meeting Of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration: report of the Chair on his visit to Guinea-Bissau* (21 August 2017), available from http://www.peaceportal.org/documents/131696911/131809183/PBC+Ambassadorial-level+meeting+of+the+Guinea-Bissau+configuration+-+21+August+2017/6bd7aeac-8d7f-4138-8e3a-fb0476f05726?version=1.0.

40   *Supra*, note 25.

41   *Supra,* note 29.

42   *Supra,* note 30.

43   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *PBC annual session 2017 concept paper and programme: Financing for Peace* (30 June 2017), available from http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/PBC%20Annual%20Session%202017%20-%20Concept%20note%20-%20FINAL(1).pdf.

44   *Supra,* note 39.

45   *Supra,* note 29.

46   See United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the *Peacebuilding Commission on its eighth session,* A/69/818 (11 March 2015), available from http://undocs.org/A/69/818.

47   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Peacebuilding Commission's Gender Strategy,* available from http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/07092016-%20PBC%20Gender%20Strategy_FINAL.pdf.

48   *Ibid,* page 9.

49   *Supra,* note 36.

50   *Supra,* note 25.

51   *Supra,* note 39.

52   See Quaker United Nations Office and The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, *Filling the Gap: how civil society engagement can help the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture meet its purpose,* page 50 (April 2015), from http://quno.org/sites/default/files/timeline/files/2015/Filling%20the%20Gap.pdf.

53   See United Nations, Peacebuilding Fund, *About GYPI,* from https://www.pbfgypi.org/.

54   *Supra,* note 16.

55   *Supra,* note 1.

56   *Ibid.*

57   *Ibid.*

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