



A Network of People
Building Peace

JUNE 2021

EVOLUTION OF THE LEADERSHIP ON SUSTAINING PEACE:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION



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ACRONYMS

CSC – Country-specific Configuration
DHF – Dag Hammarskjold Foundation
DPPA – Department for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs
ECOSOC – UN Economic and Social Council
GPPAC – Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
IFI – International Financial Institution
IID – Informal Interactive Dialogue
IMF – International Monetary Fund
IPI – International Peace Institute
NYPG – New York Peacebuilding Group
PBAR – UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review
PBC – UN Peacebuilding Commission
PBF – UN Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO – Peacebuilding Support Office (housed within DPPA)
SVIC – Sexual Violence in Conflict
UN – United Nations
UNOWAS – United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNSC – UN Security Council
WPS – Women, Peace and Security
WTO – World Trade Organization
YPS – Youth, Peace and Security

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	01
Executive Summary	02
Introduction	07
Towards Sustaining Peace: Action Areas for Further Transformation	08
Action Area 1: Strengthening Partnerships	10
1.1 Engaging Regional Organisations	11
1.2 Building Partnerships with Civil Society	11
1.3 Engaging in Partnerships with Financial Actors	12
Action Area 2: Fostering the Participation of Young Peacebuilders	16
Action Area 3: Advancing Gender Analysis and Participation of Women Peacebuilders	19
Action Area 4: Supporting Funding for Sustaining Peace	22
Action Area 5: Bolstering Policy Coherence	25
Action Area 6: Expanding System-wide Coherence	28
Action Area 7: Institutionalising Sustaining Peace	31
Recommendations	33

FOREWORD

The UN Peacebuilding Commission (hereafter, the Commission) has evolved into a stronger leader on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In 2006, – the year the Commission had its first meeting – it convened meetings on two countries: Burundi (PBC/1/BDI/SR.1) and Sierra Leone (PBC/1/OC/5). As of June 2021, the Commission has engaged on 22 countries and regions.[i] The Commission has also expanded its thematic topics to include issues of the socio-economic impact of Ebola, COVID-19, and other crises, as well as climate change, as they affect peacebuilding.

The Commission's work plays a particularly critical role in advancing the understanding of peacebuilding beyond post-conflict reconstruction, as well as in amplifying voices of diverse peacebuilding stakeholders, including women, youth, and local communities. Its leadership is critical to advance the fundamental shift from reaction to prevention that we at GPPAC see as the foundation of sustainable peace.

Since 2003, the GPPAC network has worked with partners to support and contribute to the Commission's work through individual engagement via long-standing partnerships[ii] and through the Sustaining Peace Roundtable Series.[iii] GPPAC has informed two reviews of the UN peacebuilding architecture, in 2015 and 2020, and supported the practical implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace by the Commission, the UN, Member States, regional organisations, and local peacebuilders.

What we have noted throughout our longstanding engagement with the Commission is that the role of the Commission in sustaining peace depends on Member States themselves and the composition of the Commission. In recent years, the engagement with civil society, commitment to gender equality and inclusivity, including the Gender Strategy[iv] and the Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding,[v] and the focus on prevention have all increased. At the same time, enhancing the Commission's leadership hinges on the capacities, commitments, and political goals of Member States. Future progress will also depend on the Commission's capacity to sustain this energy. Therefore, it is critical that the Commission institutionalises capacities for sustaining peace. Doing so paves the way towards a stronger Commission that continues to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace through policy and programming at all levels.

Building on GPPAC's established expertise in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, this report aims to highlight key good practices in the work of the Commission in advancing sustaining peace and provide some priority actions that Member States of the Commission could undertake to further advance its leadership. We hope this report will be a valuable resource for all Member States, but particularly those on the Commission, interested in strengthening the Commission's leadership on sustaining peace.

Sincerely,
Victoria Carreras Lloveras
Interim Executive Director
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 twin resolutions on the 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282) explicitly recognise the Commission's role as a leader in sustaining peace, which was later confirmed in the outcome of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review that culminated in the dual resolutions (A/RES/75/201 and S/RES/2558).

Leadership on the sustaining peace agenda requires concerted action in a variety of areas. First, partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society, and financial actors are crucial to ensuring widespread ownership and consolidated action on the sustaining peace agenda. Second, promoting inclusivity in sustaining peace by mobilising action on the implementation of the WPS Agenda, the YPS Agenda, and sustainable development in the work of the Commission. Further, the simultaneous increase in quantity and quality of financing for peacebuilding is a necessary component to making the sustaining peace agenda successful. Additionally, the sustaining peace agenda will be more successful if implemented across the whole UN, through the convening capacity of the Commission. Finally, promoting sustaining peace requires institutionalised capacities, which must be nurtured within the Commission.

Following a review of key good practices in the work of the Commission in advancing sustaining peace in the body of this report, we present priority actions that Member States of the Commission could undertake to further advance the progress:



STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

With regional organisations, the Commission should consider more systematic engagement, where appropriate. The engagement with regional organisations, regardless of the depth of the partnership, should not be ad-hoc and should include appropriate follow-up. By engaging in contexts where regionalism remains weak or highly politicised, the Commission can mobilise the appropriate regional actors to create a platform to discuss opportunities for regional action.

With civil society, the Commission should focus on increasing the transparency of its work and develop systematic engagement with independent civil society. This includes 1) improving the availability of the Commission's calendar, concept notes, and records on the Commission's website that enables timely and adequate engagement of civil society; 2) developing systematised and institutionalised engagement with civil society coalitions; 3) ensuring that independent and diverse civil society, including local women and youth peacebuilders, is present in all briefings of the Commission, via timely notification ahead of briefings and funding available for their travel to New York or during the Commission's visits; and 4) making sure that there are appropriate systems of follow-up and addressing of concerns raised by civil society briefers, including protection when necessary.

To ensure systematisation of civil society engagement, one model that could be replicated is for Member States to organise informal dialogues both in the field and at headquarters with civil society to get perspectives from local networks around pressing concerns.

With financial actors, the Commission needs to recognise and better utilise its role in supporting donor engagement in peacebuilding. This requires engaging the donor community in its meetings and developing partnership agreements that set guidelines and expectations, like the UN-World Bank Partnership Framework. During an annual meeting on financing for peacebuilding, Member States could improve their interactions with financial actors and develop joint long-term strategies, beyond the PBF, aimed at strengthening peacebuilding and sustaining peace action.

FOSTERING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS



To strengthen its engagement with young peacebuilders, the Commission should fully implement its Youth and Peacebuilding Action Plan both in terms of a dedicated focus on YPS throughout its work as well as by including young peacebuilders' perspectives in all the Commission's work. It is important for the Commission to conduct adequate annual reporting on the progress achieved, with the key highlights included in the Commission's annual report. Additionally, the Commission should hold informal consultations with youth peacebuilders to hear their perspective, but more importantly to engage them as partners, following the guidance of the Youth, Peace and Security Programming Handbook.^[vi] Where possible, Member States should engage their youth delegates and attachés in the work of the Commission.

To support the innovative work of young peacebuilders at the country level, the Commission should encourage Member States to develop national strategies, including the creation of national youth political structures and support national governments in gaining political, financial, and technical support for such action.

To promote and amplify youth leadership, the Commission should promote the use of youth-sensitive conflict analysis in its own work as well as in advice to other UN bodies. This could include continuing the practice of the Commission's Chair making a statement at the UNSC open debate on YPS. Moreover, the Commission should acknowledge the threats and challenges that young people face and work to advance the right of youth to operate in safe environments.



ADVANCING GENDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS

To strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding, the Commission should increase its engagement with diverse women peacebuilders by 1) regularly inviting them as meeting briefers and actively engaging with them during field visits, with a guaranteed feedback loop; and 2) encouraging peacebuilding experts to ensure their meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives in a way that enables their ownership and locally-led action.

To ensure that peacebuilding incorporates gender analysis, the Commission should consider 1) training for Member States on gender-transformative peacebuilding developed in partnership with civil society; 2) the encouragement of gender-sensitive and gender-specific early warning indicators and evidence-based research developed in partnership with local communities; 3) an assessment of gender power relations in all the Commission's work; 4) the participation of gender experts as civil society briefers who are able to highlight – based on local evidence – the gendered nature of the root causes and impact of conflict; and 5) the inclusion of gender analysis in Commission's communication with other UN bodies. Regular evaluation of the implementation of the Gender Strategy should be a transparent process carried out in partnership with civil society and in accordance with the Action Plan.

SUPPORTING QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE FUNDING



To support quality financing for peacebuilding, the Commission should advocate for exploring innovative and flexible ways of financing peacebuilding that ensure the impact of peacebuilding at the field level and better coordination among various donors and funds on that matter. In particular, the 2022 High-Level Meeting on financing for peacebuilding offers an opportunity for multi-stakeholder exchange to share transformative ideas and generate political will to improve the current donorship systems. Member States can specifically encourage the PBF and the donor community to develop guidelines for authentic partnerships that shift decision-making at the programmatic level to local peacebuilders.[vii]

To advance financing for peacebuilding that enables local ownership, Member States should informally organise (i.e., create an informal working group or engage via the Group of Friends on Sustaining Peace) to explore different innovative models and pooled funds to ensure that financing for peacebuilding enables stronger impact at the ground level. Diversified international assistance can help mitigate the risk for otherwise reluctant commercial investors in conflict-affected contexts to mobilise new financing sources.

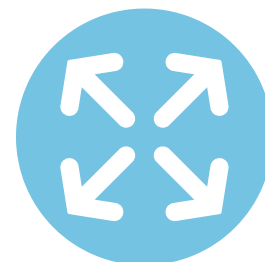
To achieve improved coordination within the donor community, a space for regular donor dialogue that brings together bilateral donor countries, the UN, private foundations, and civil society organisations managing peacebuilding funds and that promotes coherence, coordination, and transparency of financing strategies should be created. The possibilities for coordination with the private sector and international financial institutions should also be further explored by the Commission in each context before the development of specific coordination channels.



BOLSTERING POLICY COHERENCE

To play a role in advancing policy coherence across the UN system, the Commission should continue proactively responding to contemporary challenges to sustaining peace. Because sustaining peace encompasses the whole peace continuum, from prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, the Commission should increase its focus on addressing root causes of conflict and resilience factors throughout its work. The Commission should hold thematic meetings on a variety of root causes of conflict and share its findings with other bodies, like the Security Council and ECOSOC. More broadly, the Commission should develop a strategy on conflict prevention and how various root causes of conflict could be addressed through the Commission's work.

EXPANDING SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE



To ensure system-wide coherence in advancing sustaining peace, the Commission could broaden its engagement with other UN institutions to advance joint analysis and planning, as well as coherent implementation. To support this, reports, assessments, and analyses prepared by PBSO should be developed in close partnership and coordination with other UN entities at the HQ and field levels. Further, the Commission could take advantage of the Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) model of engagement with the Security Council and develop similar approaches with the ECOSOC, General Assembly, and the other UN bodies. Additionally, it is critical for the Commission to increase its engagement, where relevant, with UN field presences, such as UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators, Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), among others.

To ensure cross-fertilisation of peacebuilding expertise across the UN System, Member States of the Commission should bring their peacebuilding expertise into other UN processes and bodies. When Member States leave the Commission, national governments could also consider other avenues for continued engagement with the Commission and peacebuilding through Member States' presence in other intergovernmental spaces.

Critical and realistic assessment of the implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace should be undertaken ahead of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. The Commission should take the lead on developing a multi-stakeholder monitoring framework that measures the success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace by impact at the field level rather than outputs. The Commission's Secretariat can work with PBSO to track the progress and integration of the sustaining peace agenda across the UN System, including at the field level. Member States need to be regularly updated on the progress and lessons learned. Meaningful involvement of civil society in the process of the Review is also of paramount importance. Building on the good practices and lessons learned from the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review process, such engagement should be planned and initiated early to provide ample time for consultations with diverse actors, and clear channels for the integration of civil society inputs should be defined.



INSTITUTIONALISING SUSTAINING PEACE

To maintain the leadership on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, Member States of the Commission (regardless of their formal role on the Commission), with the support of the Chair, can take leadership on specific issues, such as financing, climate change, and others, including through consultation with civil society experts. The PBC Secretariat Secretariat should capitalise on using online platforms to connect diverse stakeholders, as well as create determined systems of follow-up and track the Commission's engagement. Moreover, the work of the Commission should become more transparent with advance notice of opportunities for engagement and by positioning the website of the Commission as a platform for systematic research.

INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of dual resolutions on Sustaining Peace (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282), the Commission has become the primary point of referral for the sustaining peace agenda within the UN. In December 2020, the second dual resolutions on Sustaining Peace (A/RES/75/201 and S/RES/2558) reiterated the Commission's importance in efforts to sustain peace. The resolutions specifically called on the Commission to continue strengthening its role in supporting nationally owned priorities and strengthening its working methods to enhance its efficiency and impact in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/RES/75/201 and S/RES/2558, OP2).

Peacebuilding is understood as a shared task that must reflect the needs of all segments of the population, from people in the nations' capitals to those in the most remote areas, and across the peace continuum, from prevention to the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, as well as recovery, reconstruction, and development (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282).

The trajectories of conflict and crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have been the driving force in the Commission becoming more flexible, inclusive, and comprehensive as demonstrated by the expansion of the Commission's advisory and convening roles. Some of the good practices include 1) the rapid adaptation of the Commission's activities to the context of COVID-19; 2) moving away from a siloed approach to increased engagement with thematic areas and actors inside and outside of the UN System; 3) an improved record on integration of cross-cutting agendas, such as WPS and YPS; and 4) increased engagement in action across the peace spectrum from addressing root causes of conflict to post-conflict peacebuilding.

There are, however, some areas that require further inquiry. For one, the Commission's expansion of thematic and geographical discussions can significantly overburden the Commission and prevent in-depth action and follow-up. Another challenge is the lack of transparency in the work of the Commission. Meaningful engagement of all relevant actors and impactful conversation requires time to prepare and mobilise expertise for appropriate analysis and action. Additionally, a consensus-based working method in the Organizational Committee, which requires all Commission members to agree on meeting topics and published outputs, often prevents inclusion of language or meetings about topics that individual Member States object to, essentially acting like a veto.[viii] Finally, it is yet to be identified how the Commission can, within the scope of its mandate, support peacebuilding work to become more impactful at the field level. One potential is clearer incorporation of prevention into its work; however, the Commission's stance on prevention remains unclear. As the Chair's Letter to the Security Council and General Assembly (S/2020/645 – A/74/935) recognises, peacebuilding work needs to be managed in terms of measurable impact rather than outputs.

Developed through the lens of priorities and expertise within the GPPAC local peacebuilders' network and in consultation with appropriate, informed stakeholders within the UN and the Permanent Missions of Member States to the UN, this report shares several recently developed key good practices in the work of the Commission in advancing sustaining peace. On that basis it spells out some priority actions that Member States of the Commission could undertake to further advance the effectiveness of its work.

TOWARDS SUSTAINING PEACE:

ACTION AREAS FOR FURTHER TRANSFORMATION

Building on the progress achieved and lessons learned, the Commission's work, impact, and progress could be enhanced by 1) strengthening partnerships; 2) fostering the participation of young peacebuilders; 3) advancing gender analysis and participation of women peacebuilders; 4) supporting funding for sustaining peace; 5) bolstering policy coherence; 6) expanding system-wide coherence; and 7) institutionalising sustaining peace.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

FOSTERING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS

ADVANCING GENDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS

SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR SUSTAINING PEACE

BOLSTERING POLICY COHERENCE

EXPANDING SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE

INSTITUTIONALISING SUSTAINING PEACE



*We cannot achieve
sustaining peace alone!
Successful peacebuilding
requires strong
partnerships between
international and regional
organisations, civil
society, and financial
actors in a way that
generates real impact at
the ground level.*

A woman peacebuilder from the Pacific

ACTION AREA 1: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS



No single actor can achieve sustaining peace alone. Recognising this fact, the UN Charter (Chapter 8) encourages multi-stakeholder partnerships between the UN and regional organisations, especially with regards to maintaining peace and security. The Commission is well-positioned to support partnership-building between relevant national, international, regional, and sub-regional actors, financial actors, and civil society to ensure joint ownership, commitment, and action on sustaining peace.

The focus of the Commission’s work could be to inspire transparent, systematic, and inclusive partnerships in ways that bring about impact at the field level.

1.1. ENGAGING REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS:

Current local conflict dynamics often have regional and cross-regional aspects and consequences. Responding to this challenge, the Commission has, in recent years, engaged with regional actors with peacebuilding mandates to improve information sharing, coordination, and joint approaches.

Partnerships between the Commission and regional organisations have a practical nature and lead to concrete results, where they exist. One of the best examples is the Commission’s engagement in the Sahel region guided by the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and operationalised through the 2018-2030 Support Plan for the Sahel.[ix] The Commission played a particularly important role in implementing the strategy by “complementing the focus of the Security Council on peace and security and by strengthening engagement with ECOSOC and the development system and supporting strengthened UN partnership with international financial institutions,”[x] focusing specifically on the Sahel. This has generally led to increased resource mobilisation and ensuring that the security, governance, and resilience pillars of the Strategy are efficiently implemented.

Similar partnerships are growing between the Commission and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 2020 alone, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has been able to bring together stakeholders to conduct regional dialogues on the Sahel, the Pacific, Central Africa, and West Africa.

Through its advice to the Council, the Commission has made consistent efforts to bring attention to the importance of coordinated regional action. These efforts are reflected in the Commission's letter on the UNOWAS mandate (A/74/935–S/2020/645), in which the Commission suggested that UNOWAS could support strengthened coordination and partnerships with relevant regional actors. Shortly thereafter, a letter by the President of the Security Council (S/2020/85) on the UNOWAS mandate also laid out one of the objectives of the mission as strengthening partnerships with regional organisations.

The record on partnerships with regional organisations remains inconsistent. Many regional engagements remain ad-hoc and one-time at the expense of systematic and in-depth partnerships. One such example is the July 2020 meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Pacific islands.[xi] The meeting was “convened at the request of Fiji in close consultation with Tuvalu,”[xii] who was chair of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) at the time and briefed the Commission during the meeting. While Member States expressed support for the Commission's engagement with the Pacific, the meeting did not include any plans to follow up in subsequent meetings. To date, the Commission has not held any follow-up meetings on the Pacific. It appeared to be even harder however for the Commission to engage with other regional organisations, such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

1.2. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY:

Civil society actors are often the first responders to the signs of instability and have their hand on the “pulse” of the community. Strategic partnerships between the Commission and civil society remain crucial for sustaining peace to bring impact on the ground. The recent years have seen the increased engagement of the Commission with civil society, including during the chairmanships of Sweden, the Republic of Korea, Colombia, and Canada.

The Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society (PBC/1/OC/12) provide transparency on how civil society can engage with the Commission. These Guidelines enable civil society to make statements during the Commission's meetings at the invitation of the Chair and approval of the members. Civil society may also submit written statements to the Chair who can share these with other members.

Planning for the Commission's response to COVID-19, the Permanent Mission of Canada, Commission chair at the time, and the members of the New York Peacebuilding Group (NYPG) organised an informal expert-level meeting on the impact of COVID-19 early on in May 2020. This discussion led to a better understanding of the contexts and ways the Commission could respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided visibility and recognition of local peacebuilding work to address its impacts. Later, two local peacebuilders – from East Africa and the Pacific – were invited into the Commission's meetings on COVID-19. During the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, civil society experts noted the positive focus on more systematic engagement and a greater role dedicated to civil society by the Commission's Member States.[xiii]

Despite the growing number of civil society briefers, there has been some backsliding on long-standing good practices. The Commission has formerly engaged with civil society experts during the Commission's annual meetings; however, not in 2020. This is a lost opportunity in the context of getting an independent assessment of the Commission's work across different areas of work that these organisations could shed the light on.

The partnership between the Commission and NYPG could be systematised by learning from the example of the Security Council's engagement with the NGO Working Group on WPS. In this partnership, upon the request of Member States, the NGO Working Group runs an independent and transparent nomination process for civil society representatives to brief the Council during the Annual Open debates on WPS and SVIC. To this end, the Commission could leverage its existing partnerships with civil society coalitions, notably NYPG, to replicate a similar process.

Further, the lack of transparency in the Commission's processes also hampers civil society's ability to engage with the Commission. For example, the unavailability of the Commission's calendar in advance prevents civil society from engaging formally or informally with the Commission. Availability of this information in advance would strengthen the capacity of civil society to inform the discussions ahead of time with valuable in-country considerations.

1.3. ENGAGING IN PARTNERSHIPS WITH FINANCIAL ACTORS

One of the challenging aspects of the work on peacebuilding and sustaining peace is the financing of peacebuilding efforts. In his 2020 report (A/73/724–S/2019/88), the Secretary-General repeated his call for a “quantum leap” in funding for peacebuilding, noting that without that increased funding many peacebuilding activities had already been stopped and would continue to be postponed. To address this challenge, the Commission can mobilise actors best suited to provide financial backing to peacebuilding challenges and specifically transitions.

Within the UN System, the Commission's synergies with the PBF have allowed the Commission to influence the work of the Fund. Under the chairmanship of Colombia, the Commission increased its synergy with the Fund in three main ways. First, having PBSO brief the Commission on updates on the Fund's work at relevant regional and country-specific meetings, second, having members of the PBF Advisory Group brief the Commission on the results of the Group's meetings, and finally, having briefers from countries receiving support from the Fund (A/73/724–S/2019/88). This has allowed the Commission's policy discussions to influence the work of the Fund, as noted by Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco.[xiv] Specifically, the Fund's new Strategy 2020-2024 not only calls for increased collaboration between the two bodies but the strategy was also created in part through consultations with the Commission.[xv]

Outside the UN System, the Commission has broadened its engagement with IFIs, regional banks, and, where relevant, the private sector. One example of a successful and systematic partnership with an IFI is the Commission's partnership with the World Bank. The Commission's increased partnership with the Bank is part of the 2020 UN-World Bank Partnership in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries that focuses on cooperation between the two bodies to address root causes of conflict in over 50 countries.[xvi] The World Bank and the IMF are the two IFIs allowed to attend all the Commission's meetings and World Bank representatives frequently serve as briefers to the Commission. In 2020, representatives from the World Bank briefed the Commission at eight meetings, which covered subjects ranging from updates on different countries and regions to COVID-19.[xvii] The Commission's partnership with regional banks has also been increasing. Representatives from the African Development Bank briefed the Commission at three separate meetings in 2020, on March 5, and October 23 and 27.[xviii] The Commission occasionally partners with the private sector, but partnerships are not systematic, and the modalities of such partnerships require further clarity.[xix] The partnership with the World Bank is the most successful as it is the most systematic and transparent. It, therefore, serves as a good practice to be modelled in partnerships with other financial actors.

The Commission's convening role has helped mobilise more financing specifically for the Fund, as well as for countries on the agenda. For example, Canada co-chaired a high-level Replenishment Conference for the PBF in January 2021, which came out of a Commission meeting on financing for peacebuilding in November 2020.[xx] The Conference mobilised funding from fourteen new Member States, who had not previously donated, including several countries on the Commission's agenda, like Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and the Gambia.[xxi] Additionally, under the aegis of the UN-World Bank partnership, a Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment (PPBA) helped Burkina Faso develop its Matrix of Priority Actions, which the government presented at a Commission meeting on March 5, 2020.[xxii] Following this meeting, the Chair of the Commission, Canada, obtained statements from Member States of the Commission and other financial partners on new financial support for the Matrix of Priority Actions.[xxiii]



Moving Forward:

With regional organisations, the Commission should consider more systematic engagement, where appropriate (akin to the one in the Sahel). The engagement with regional organisations, regardless of the depth of the partnership, should not be ad-hoc and should include appropriate follow-up. By engaging in contexts where regionalism remains weak or highly politicised, the Commission can mobilise the appropriate regional actors to create a platform to discuss opportunities for regional action.

With civil society, the Commission should focus on increasing the transparency of its work and develop systematic engagement with independent civil society. This includes 1) improving the availability of the Commission's calendar, concept notes, and records on the Commission's website that enables timely and adequate engagement of civil society; 2) developing systematised and institutionalised engagement with civil society coalitions, such as the New York Peacebuilding Group (NYPG); 3) ensuring that independent and diverse civil society, including local women and youth peacebuilders, is present in all briefings of the Commission, via timely notification ahead of briefings and funding available for their travel to New York or during the Commission's visits; and 4) making sure that there are appropriate systems of follow-up and addressing of concerns raised by civil society briefers, including protection when necessary. It is also necessary to develop an engagement framework to ensure that the partnership does not stop with the transition in the Commission's leadership, perhaps through the development of a civil society engagement strategy. To ensure systematisation of civil society engagement, one model that could be replicated is for Member States to organise informal dialogues both in the field and at headquarters with civil society to get perspectives from local networks around pressing concerns.

With financial actors, the Commission needs to recognise and better utilise its role in supporting donor engagement in peacebuilding. This requires engaging the donor community in its meetings and developing partnership agreements that set guidelines and expectations, like the UN-World Bank Partnership Framework. During an annual meeting on financing for peacebuilding, Member States could improve their interactions with financial actors and develop joint long-term strategies, beyond the PBF, aimed at strengthening peacebuilding and sustaining peace action.



Young people are some of the most affected by conflict and will soon inherit the problems of today. This is why it is important to engage with, and support, the work of young peacebuilders as well as amplify youth leadership so that young people can be agents of change in peaceful conflict resolution.

A young peacebuilder from India

ACTION AREA 2: FOSTERING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS



Innovative methodologies employed by young peacebuilders help drive social change in some of the most polarised conflict settings. In addition to already being successful and innovative peacebuilders, youth often comprise large or even majority current constituencies in countries in conflict,[xxiv] who will also inherit today's problems and the impacts of today's challenges to implementation. As such, youth deserve a seat at the table, as well as the consideration of their diverse needs in conflict. Since the adoption of the inaugural youth, peace and security resolution (S/RES/2250) by the UN Security Council in 2015, which recognised the important contributions by youth to promoting peace, the Commission has made notable progress in the advancement of the inclusivity approach through consolidated actions, including the 2021 Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding.[xxv]

The Commission should increase its engagement both with young peacebuilders and with the YPS Agenda.

Recently, the Commission engaged youth peacebuilders and representatives from youth-led institutions from around the world through its country-specific and regional visits.[xxvi] It heard directly from young people from contexts as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, The Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Solomon Islands.[xxvii] The Commission has held three YPS thematic meetings since 2015, with the goal to understand and uplift the role young people play in planning and stabilisation efforts in peacebuilding.[xxviii]

Lessons learned by the Commission are passed on through its advisory role and the development of the Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding. As a specific and notable example, the Commission's letter on the 2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (A/74/935–S/2020/645) shared with the Security Council and General Assembly included multiple recommendations supporting greater youth inclusion. Notably, shortly after this letter was sent to the Security Council, the Council passed a resolution highlighting the importance of youth participation in conflict prevention and resolution, including their role in post-conflict reconstruction (S/RES/2535). Similarly, the Action Plan provides concrete actions the Commission can undertake to continue uplifting the role of youth in peacebuilding. To increase the Commission's promotion of youth inclusion in peacebuilding and support of youth peacebuilders, the Action Plan offers several related actions and indicators to track progress.

Specifically, indicators in the Plan track the number of the Commission's outcome documents that promote youth engagement and the percentage of advice and briefings to the ECOSOC, Security Council, and General Assembly that include recommendations centred on youth.[xxix] All of these indicators, if the improvement is sufficient, can help the Commission in strengthening its leadership in inclusive and youth-led action on sustaining peace.

However, the space for improvement remains. The critical challenge is to ensure that the diversity of young peacebuilders is included and to address the assumption that one young representative can speak to the needs of all young people at the community level. Similarly, while the Commission engages with a variety of youth peacebuilders and youth-led organisations, its engagement with them remains sporadic and largely confined to thematic discussions on YPS, with a very limited feedback loop. Although the Commission provides advice to the Security Council on the inclusion of youth peacebuilders, it has yet to do so with other UN bodies. While the Action Plan serves as a good beginning roadmap for increasing the Commission's engagement with YPS, the Plan is rather short, lacking actions and indicators dedicated to follow-up engagement with diverse youth peacebuilders and youth-led organisations.



Moving Forward:

To strengthen its engagement with young peacebuilders, the Commission should fully implement its Youth and Peacebuilding Action Plan both in terms of a dedicated focus on YPS throughout its work as well as by including young peacebuilders' perspectives in all the Commission's work. It is important for the Commission to conduct adequate annual reporting on the progress achieved, with the key highlights included in the Commission's annual report. Additionally, the Commission should hold informal consultations with youth peacebuilders to hear their perspective, but more importantly to engage them as partners, following the guidance of the Youth, Peace and Security Programming Handbook.[xxx] Where possible, Member States should engage their youth delegates and attachés in the work of the Commission.

To support the innovative work of young peacebuilders at the country level, the Commission should encourage Member States to develop national strategies, including the creation of national youth political structures and support national governments in gaining political, financial, and technical support for such action.

To promote and amplify youth leadership, the Commission should promote the use of youth-sensitive conflict analysis in its own work as well as in advice to other UN bodies. This could include continuing the practice of the Commission's Chair making a statement at the UNSC open debate on YPS. Moreover, the Commission should acknowledge the threats and challenges that young people face and work to advance the right of youth to operate in safe environments.



Women peacebuilders are crucial for achieving sustainable peace and we need to strengthen their meaningful participation in peacebuilding. Gender analysis also needs to be supported at all levels as this is key to the inclusion of women's needs in peacebuilding.

A woman peacebuilder from Sri Lanka

ACTION AREA 3: ADVANCING GENDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS



Women's participation and integrated gender analysis are critical to sustaining peace as they contribute to the inclusion of women's needs in peacebuilding and the transformation of peacebuilding towards a more inclusive and impactful undertaking. The Commission has made notable progress across these areas with the adoption of the Gender Strategy,[xxxix] which was most recently operationalised through an Action Plan[xxxix] adopted in February 2021 and created at the recommendation of a review of the Strategy conducted in 2020.[xxxix]

The Action Plan should be implemented in close partnership with civil society, and the resources and political commitment must be secured to realise the objectives of the Action Plan.

The Commission has advanced the focus on women peacebuilders in its meetings. For example, in 2019, the Commission held two meetings related to women and peacebuilding, as noted in the 2019 annual report (A/74/668–S/2020/80). Similarly, in 2020, the Commission convened one meeting on the WPS agenda and peacebuilding, and another on women's full participation in peacebuilding.[xxxix] The Gender Strategy Action Plan also calls for the Commission to hold at least two meetings a year to review progress on the Gender Strategy and share good practices. [xxxix] Additionally, the review of the Commission's documents showed that 67 percent of the meeting summaries from 2016 to 2020 included mentions of the Commission's support for gender-responsive peacebuilding. Similarly, all Commission field visits since June 2018 have included meetings with women's organisations. [xxxix]

LESSONS LEARNED:

In meetings where women from civil society have briefed the Security Council, Member States were more than twice as likely to raise the issue of women's meaningful participation compared to meetings where there were no civil society briefers. This increase often is sustained for several meetings, and further reinforced if multiple civil society briefers from a specific country are invited over the course of a year, indicating the importance of ensuring that there are frequent and regular women civil society briefings in addition to strong information and analysis from other sources." - NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security about the impact of civil society speakers on the discourse in the UN Security Council[xxxix]

The Commission has also promoted interactive and coherent dialogue on the role of women peacebuilders among various UN bodies. According to the 2020 review report, 73 percent of the advisory letters to the Security Council included references to gender, with a major improvement starting in 2018. This shows that the Commission has increased references to gender-sensitive considerations in its advisory letters. One good example of this advocacy is the letter from the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Commission to the President of the Security Council. The letter called for the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau to continue incorporating the peacebuilding components of Resolution 2458 (2019), which included the call for the engagement of women peacebuilders and gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding.[xxxviii] However, further work needs to be done to ensure that both gender analysis and the role of women peacebuilders are supported by the Commission.

Gender analysis addresses the gendered nature of the causes and impact of conflict, as well as the diversity of experiences of women based upon other factors such as age, gender, religion, culture, socioeconomic status, disability, and others.



Moving Forward:

To strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding, the Commission should increase its engagement with diverse women peacebuilders by 1) regularly inviting them as meeting briefers and actively engaging with them during field visits, with a guaranteed feedback loop; and 2) encouraging peacebuilding experts to ensure their meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives in a way that enables their ownership and locally-led action.

To ensure that peacebuilding incorporates gender analysis, the Commission should consider 1) training for Member States on gender-transformative peacebuilding developed in partnership with civil society; 2) the encouragement of gender-sensitive and gender-specific early warning indicators and evidence-based research developed in partnership with local communities; 3) an assessment of gender power relations in all the Commission's work; 4) the participation of gender experts as civil society briefers who are able to highlight – based on local evidence – the gendered nature of the root causes and impact of conflict; and 5) the inclusion of gender analysis in Commission's communication with other UN bodies. Regular evaluation of the implementation of the Gender Strategy should be a transparent process carried out in partnership with civil society and in accordance with the Action Plan.

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Fully sustaining peace is not possible without quality and effective funding that enables a stronger impact at the field level.

A local peacebuilder from Bosnia

ACTION AREA 4: SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR SUSTAINING PEACE



While the amount of funding available for peacebuilding remains insufficient, there is also a strong need to improve the quality of financing – understood as accessibility, flexibility, and sustainability. Thus, the Commission plays a unique role not only in being able to forge partnerships with new donors, but also in facilitating the space for donors, financing, and peacebuilding experts to engage around how to make peacebuilding financing ‘smarter’ and better suited to local needs and realities.

The Commission must catalyse its ability to provide a space for peacebuilding and financing actors to advance coordinated donor strategies to improve quantity and quality of peacebuilding.

From 2016 to 2019, the Commission held three meetings that included discussions on financing for peacebuilding, two of which were held in 2016. In these meetings, financing for peacebuilding featured as a single agenda item intended to generate more awareness of the PBF’s work, generally^[xxxix] and specific to individual countries,^[xl] and to create space to bring in more donors. Because these discussions focused solely on the work of the PBF, they did not discuss financing for peacebuilding as a broader topic nor other facets of financing for peacebuilding such as improving the quality of investments.

Under the chairmanship of Colombia, the Commission created a space for peacebuilding actors and financing actors to advance coordinated donor strategies for peacebuilding, including hosting a meeting on good practices for financing peacebuilding.^[xli] The meeting, held in Colombia in January 2020, focused on Colombia’s progress in implementing the peace agreement, as well as elucidating financing and partnership good practices in the Colombian context.

Under its chairmanship, Canada continued this work by hosting two meetings specifically on financing for peacebuilding, one of which was the Commission’s annual session.^[xlii] At the first meeting in June 2020, under the auspices of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, the focus was on increasing funds through innovative approaches. One briefer emphasized the importance of investing in local peacebuilders and civil society efforts, which several Member States supported. Additionally, several Member States noted that the Commission “should continue highlighting how innovative financing, including individual donations, private or public foundations, faith-based donations, impact investing or remittances and diaspora investments, have specifically contributed to peacebuilding efforts.”^[xliii]

The recent meetings on financing for peacebuilding by the Commission show an increasing willingness to discuss the ways to invest smarter with regards to peacebuilding, especially the recent High-level Roundtable on innovative financing for peace, hosted by Colombia and Germany, which included discussion of blended financing.[xliv] However, most financing for peacebuilding discussions still centre on increasing the quantity of funds or expanding the donor base. Even discussions of innovative financing approaches – a new focus of the Commission’s work on financing – tend to focus on increasing funding, rather than investing “smarter.” Furthermore, the emphasis on quantity, rather than quality, shifts the focus away from the impact of financing. Ways of moving financing away from projects and towards people are also still largely absent from the deliberations.



Moving Forward:

To support quality financing for peacebuilding, the Commission should advocate for exploring innovative and flexible ways of financing peacebuilding that ensure the impact of peacebuilding at the field level and better coordination among various donors and funds on that matter. In particular, the 2022 High-Level Meeting on financing for peacebuilding offers an opportunity for multi-stakeholder exchange to share transformative ideas and generate political will to improve the current donorship systems. Member States can specifically encourage the PBF and the donor community to develop guidelines for authentic partnerships that shift decision-making at the programmatic level to local peacebuilders.[xliv]

To advance financing for peacebuilding that enables local ownership, Member States should informally organise (i.e., create an informal working group or engage via the Group of Friends on Sustaining Peace) to explore different innovative models and pooled funds to ensure that financing for peacebuilding enables stronger impact at the ground level. Diversified international assistance can help mitigate the risk for otherwise reluctant commercial investors in conflict-affected contexts to mobilise new financing sources.

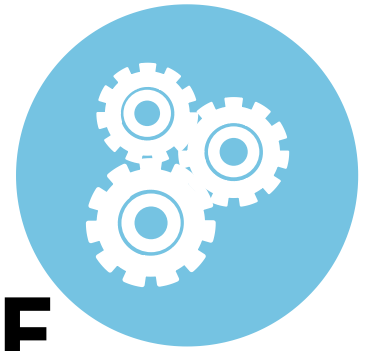
To achieve improved coordination within the donor community, a space for regular donor dialogue that brings together bilateral donor countries, the UN, private foundations, and civil society organisations managing peacebuilding funds and that promotes coherence, coordination, and transparency of financing strategies should be created. The possibilities for coordination with the private sector and international financial institutions should also be further explored by the Commission in each context before the development of specific coordination channels.

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If we are going to sustain peace, it is fundamental to address the drivers of conflict to prevent violence from occurring and to expand what topics are considered peacebuilding issues.

A local peacebuilder from Uganda

ACTION AREA 5: BOLSTERING POLICY COHERENCE



It has long been recognised that sustaining peace encompasses efforts to promote peace along the whole peace continuum, including prevention.[xlvi] This means that promoting sustaining peace requires addressing issues that exacerbate conflict and violence and, where possible, prevent them from occurring. The Commission has begun to bring other policy considerations pertaining to risk and resilience, including human rights, sustainable development, and humanitarian issues into peacebuilding action, spearheading a discussion on the growing role of the Commission in conflict prevention.

As a leader on sustaining peace, the Commission should ensure that it acts early before specific issues precipitate conflict and violence.

One of the best practices in expanding the issues on the Commission's agenda was its response to the COVID-19 pandemic – a challenge to peacebuilding as well as to human rights and development – and its effects on peacebuilding, with the first of five meetings in 2020 held on April 8.[xlvii] The global recognition of the problem has supported the ability of the Commission to rapidly shift its work towards addressing COVID-19. The content of these meetings signalled an expansion of what are considered peacebuilding topics within the purview of the Commission. As a result, the annual joint PBC-ECOSOC meeting on November 19, 2020, highlighted the need for peacebuilding to address economic and development issues, as well as root causes of conflict generally.[xlviii]

The Commission is also expanding its work in addressing climate change as a peacebuilding issue, particularly with the focus on the Sahel.[xlix] In the context of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), the Sahel is one region where the Commission is expected to support the response to climate change.[i] The Commission's emphasis on national ownership has allowed affected countries to bring the effects of climate change into their conversations with the Commission. This has been the case for Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the Pacific Islands, which have raised the issue of climate change and its linkages to security in their specific country or regional contexts.[ii]

Yet, the Commission's consensus-based working methods allow Member States to essentially veto topics they do not politically support, which has prevented further developments on strengthening the Commission's role in advancing prevention, as well as on the issue of climate change specifically. As such, prevention-related topics and non-traditional peacebuilding considerations do not receive the same attention in the Commission that other more established peacebuilding issues (i.e., financing for peacebuilding) do.



Moving Forward:

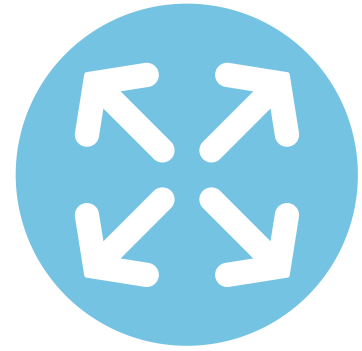
To play a role in advancing policy coherence across the UN system, the Commission should continue proactively responding to contemporary challenges to sustaining peace. Because sustaining peace encompasses the whole peace continuum, from prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, the Commission should increase its focus on addressing root causes of conflict and resilience factors throughout its work. The Commission has had significant success addressing the effects of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and this level of engagement should be replicated with other issues. Specifically, the Commission should hold thematic meetings on a variety of root causes of conflict and share its findings with other bodies, like the Security Council and ECOSOC. More broadly, the Commission should develop a strategy on conflict prevention and how various root causes of conflict could be addressed through the Commission's work.

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*Effective peacebuilding
must involve engagement
with a variety of actors,
including the whole UN
system.*

A local peacebuilder from Mexico

ACTION AREA 6: EXPANDING SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE



The 2020 dual resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (S/RES/2558 and A/RES/75/201) state that “effective peacebuilding must involve the entire UN system.” As such, peacebuilding and sustaining peace are system-wide tasks for the UN. As part of its leadership, the Commission works with a variety of UN bodies, at HQ and field level, on sustaining peace.

The Commission should promote the integration of peacebuilding and sustaining peace throughout the UN System.

The Commission works on the engagement of other UN bodies, particularly other intergovernmental bodies, on sustaining peace. The most successful example is the Commission’s consistent engagement with the Security Council. Specifically, the Commission engages with the Council through 1) IIDs; 2) periodic stocktaking at the expert level, and 3) formal briefings to the Council on country-specific and thematic issues. One good practice, highlighted in the 2020 annual report (A/75/747–S/2021/139), is the appointment of an informal coordinator between the Commission and the Council by a Member State that holds seats in both bodies. In 2020, Germany acted as the informal coordinator and organised stocktaking sessions for members of both the Council and the Commission.[lii] IIDs have often been organised around peacekeeping mission mandates ahead of their renewal with the participation of the relevant country-specific configurations, aimed at advising the Council on what peacebuilding elements should be integrated into the missions’ mandate. However, the dialogues often happen towards the end of the mandate negotiation process, making it more difficult to integrate the Commission’s recommendations.

The Commission consistently promotes peacebuilding in the work of other actors. The current Chair of the Commission, Egypt, has taken the lead on this by briefing other fora, including the WTO Trade for Peace Network,[liii] the Committee of Experts on Public Administration,[liv] and the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. [lv] Additionally, the Chair is set to brief the Human Rights Council later in 2021, beginning an annual practice (A/HRC/RES/45/31). However, the potential to integrate peacebuilding into the work of other bodies is not limited to the work of the Chair. For example, Member States who have a seat on the Commission and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), which provides recommendations on peace operations, have often worked to advance peacebuilding priorities in peace operations. In fact, the 2020 annual report (A/75/747–S/2021/139) calls for Member States to report back to the bodies from which they were elected and “advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace,” which could include C-34.

The Commission also engages beyond intergovernmental bodies while working within the UN System, particularly by engaging those who work at the field level. In 2020, Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General were the plurality of UN briefers in the Commission's meetings. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a member of the Guinea-Bissau configuration (PBC/5/OC/8), while the UN Office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) is a member of the Guinea and Liberia configurations (PBC/5/OC/7).

However, there is no formal critical assessment of the status of the system-wide integration of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. While designed to provide evaluation of the sustaining peace agenda, the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review fell short of offering a constructive assessment of the challenges faced by the sustaining peace agenda within the UN system. In their reflection on the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, civil society experts noted the need for improved spaces for critical feedback on the UN's peacebuilding architecture, as well as better mechanisms for accountability.[lvi]



Moving Forward:

To ensure system-wide coherence in advancing sustaining peace, the Commission could broaden its engagement with other UN institutions to advance joint analysis and planning, as well as coherent implementation. To support this, reports, assessments, and analyses prepared by PBSO should be developed in close partnership and coordination with other UN entities at the HQ and field levels. Further, the Commission could take advantage of the Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) model of engagement with the Security Council and develop similar approaches with the ECOSOC, General Assembly, and the other UN bodies. Additionally, it is critical for the Commission to increase its engagement, where relevant, with UN field presences, such as UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators, Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), among others.

To ensure cross-fertilisation of peacebuilding expertise across the UN System, Member States of the Commission should bring their peacebuilding expertise into other UN processes and bodies. When Member States leave the Commission, national governments could also consider other avenues for continued engagement with the Commission and peacebuilding through Member States' presence in other intergovernmental spaces.

Critical and realistic assessment of the implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace should be undertaken ahead of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. The Commission should take the lead on developing a multi-stakeholder monitoring framework that measures the success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace by impact at the field level rather than outputs. The Commission's Secretariat can work with PBSO to track the progress and integration of the sustaining peace agenda across the UN System, including at the field level. Member States need to be regularly updated on the progress and lessons learned. Meaningful involvement of civil society in the process of the Review is also of paramount importance. Building on the good practices and lessons learned from the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review process, such engagement should be planned and initiated early to provide ample time for consultations with diverse actors, and clear channels for the integration of civil society inputs should be defined.

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The Peacebuilding Commission needs to develop its capacities so to be able to adequately meet the needs of the peacebuilding agenda and lead the charge in sustaining peace.

A woman peacebuilder from Lebanon

ACTION AREA 7: INSTITUTIONALISING SUSTAINING PEACE



The Commission's status as the main UN body for peacebuilding is underpinned by its convening and advisory roles, together with engagement through the country-specific configurations (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282). The key trend in the Commission is the diversification of the Commission's working methods, as its capacities continue to evolve.

The Commission requires the development of significant capacities to enable focus, expertise, and processes reflective of the needs of the sustaining peace agenda.

Recently, the Commission has begun to address a growing number of countries not included in the country-specific configurations, matters at the regional level, and thematic issues that extend beyond traditional peacebuilding. Starting under the Republic of Korea chairmanship in 2017 (A/72/721–S/2018/83), the Commission began to broaden its geographical reach to include contexts beyond the CSCs, including Colombia, the Gambia, the Solomon Islands, and Sri Lanka. With the increase of national and regional contexts, the Commission has begun to address “the needs of a broader range of fragile states besides those emerging from conflict,”^[lvii] and in doing so, has expanded the nature of peacebuilding beyond post-conflict reconstruction.

As a result of the expansion of its work, the Commission has been moving away from organising its work around CSCs and towards conducting more of its activities through the Organizational Committee with all 31 Member States. Because of this, the principle of consensus has become more salient. The consensus-based approach means that all 31 Member States must agree on meeting topics and produced language; in effect, this allows individual countries to veto topics and language they do not agree with, as noted by the example of climate change above.^[lviii]

Having the outgoing Commission's Chair serve as Vice Chair is another procedural good practice within the Commission, which ensures continuity and support to the incoming Chair. Vice-Chairs then support the Chair by presiding over many thematic discussions. In the 2020 annual report (A/75/747–S/2021/139), the Commission committed to continuing this practice, which helps increase institutional capacity and minimise the transition challenges associated with different capacities within various permanent missions. Overall, this practice maintains gains from previous chairs via knowledge building and promoting the establishment of institutional memory.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has increased the transparency of its work. With the meetings moving online, recordings are now regularly available on the Commission's website, providing some level of transparency. Additionally, other good practices include the easily searchable database of the Commission's documents, a clear definition of the Commission's mandate and membership, and easy access to the Commission's strategies and action plans. These practices could be sustained in the long-term.

However, parts of the Commission's website could benefit from more information or restructuring to be more transparent. For example, the sections on Working Methods could include more information specifically on country-specific configurations and regional focuses, as there is little information on them elsewhere. As mentioned previously, it would be beneficial for the Commission to publish its calendar in a timelier manner and make meeting concept notes publicly available on the website. Having the Commission's work transparently available on its website provides an opportunity for independent experts to develop adequate recommendations to support the work of the Commission.

The biggest overarching challenge that may soon exacerbate the pre-existing challenges in the operations of the Commission is its increased visibility and greater scope of considerations. Not every Member State on the Commission is equally capacitated to drive the work of the Commission forward with the same pace that the Commission has had in recent years. Moreover, the visibility of the Commission results in increased politisation of its work, with the Commission potentially needing to water down some of the strong language in its documents that has emerged over the last couple of years.



Moving Forward:

To maintain the leadership on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, Member States of the Commission (regardless of their formal role on the Commission), with the support of the Chair, can take leadership on specific issues, such as financing, climate change, and others, including through consultation with civil society experts. The PBC Secretariat should capitalise on using online platforms to connect with diverse stakeholders, as well as create determined systems of follow-up and track the Commission's engagement. Moreover, the work of the Commission should become more transparent with advance notice of opportunities for engagement and by positioning the website of the Commission as a platform for systematic research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

With regional organisations, the Commission should consider more systematic engagement, where appropriate. The engagement with regional organisations, regardless of the depth of the partnership, should not be ad-hoc and should include appropriate follow-up. By engaging in contexts where regionalism remains weak or highly politicised, the Commission can mobilise the appropriate regional actors to create a platform to discuss opportunities for regional action.

With civil society, the Commission should focus on increasing the transparency of its work and develop systematic engagement with independent civil society. This includes 1) improving the availability of the Commission's calendar, concept notes, and records on the Commission's website that enables timely and adequate engagement of civil society; 2) developing systematised and institutionalised engagement with civil society coalitions; 3) ensuring that independent and diverse civil society, including local women and youth peacebuilders, is present in all briefings of the Commission, via timely notification ahead of briefings and funding available for their travel to New York or during the Commission's visits; and 4) making sure that there are appropriate systems of follow-up and addressing of concerns raised by civil society briefers, including protection when necessary. To ensure systematisation of civil society engagement, one model that could be replicated is for Member States to organise informal dialogues both in the field and at headquarters with civil society to get perspectives from local networks around pressing concerns.

With financial actors, the Commission needs to recognise and better utilise its role in supporting donor engagement in peacebuilding. This requires engaging the donor community in its meetings and developing partnership agreements that set guidelines and expectations, like the UN-World Bank Partnership Framework. During an annual meeting on financing for peacebuilding, Member States could improve their interactions with financial actors and develop joint long-term strategies, beyond the PBF, aimed at strengthening peacebuilding and sustaining peace action.

FOSTERING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS

To strengthen its engagement with young peacebuilders, the Commission should fully implement its Youth and Peacebuilding Action Plan both in terms of a dedicated focus on YPS throughout its work as well as by including young peacebuilders' perspectives in all the Commission's work. It is important for the Commission to conduct adequate annual reporting on the progress achieved, with the key highlights included in the Commission's annual report. Additionally, the Commission should hold informal consultations with youth peacebuilders to hear their perspective, but more importantly to engage them as partners, following the guidance of the Youth, Peace and Security Programming Handbook.^[vi] Where possible, Member States should engage their youth delegates and attachés in the work of the Commission.

To support the innovative work of young peacebuilders at the country level, the Commission should encourage Member States to develop national strategies, including the creation of national youth political structures and support national governments in gaining political, financial, and technical support for such action.

To promote and amplify youth leadership, the Commission should promote the use of youth-sensitive conflict analysis in its own work as well as in advice to other UN bodies. This could include continuing the practice of the Commission's Chair making a statement at the UNSC open debate on YPS. Moreover, the Commission should acknowledge the threats and challenges that young people face and work to advance the right of youth to operate in safe environments.

ADVANCING GENDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS

To strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding, the Commission should increase its engagement with diverse women peacebuilders by 1) regularly inviting them as meeting briefers and actively engaging with them during field visits, with a guaranteed feedback loop; and 2) encouraging peacebuilding experts to ensure their meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives in a way that enables their ownership and locally-led action.

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SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR SUSTAINING PEACE

To support quality financing for peacebuilding, the Commission should advocate for exploring innovative and flexible ways of financing peacebuilding that ensure the impact of peacebuilding at the field level and better coordination among various donors and funds on that matter. In particular, the 2022 High-Level Meeting on financing for peacebuilding offers an opportunity for multi-stakeholder exchange to share transformative ideas and generate political will to improve the current donorship systems. Member States can specifically encourage the PBF and the donor community to develop guidelines for authentic partnerships that shift decision-making at the programmatic level to local peacebuilders.[vii]

To advance financing for peacebuilding that enables local ownership, Member States should informally organise (i.e., create an informal working group or engage via the Group of Friends on Sustaining Peace) to explore different innovative models and pooled funds to ensure that financing for peacebuilding enables stronger impact at the ground level. Diversified international assistance can help mitigate the risk for otherwise reluctant commercial investors in conflict-affected contexts to mobilise new financing sources.

BOLSTERING POLICY COHERENCE

To play a role in advancing policy coherence across the UN system, the Commission should continue proactively responding to contemporary challenges to sustaining peace. Because sustaining peace encompasses the whole peace continuum, from prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, the Commission should increase its focus on addressing root causes of conflict and resilience factors throughout its work. The Commission should hold thematic meetings on a variety of root causes of conflict and share its findings with other bodies, like the Security Council and ECOSOC. More broadly, the Commission should develop a strategy on conflict prevention and how various root causes of conflict could be addressed through the Commission's work.

EXPANDING SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE

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To ensure cross-fertilisation of peacebuilding expertise across the UN System, Member States of the Commission should bring their peacebuilding expertise into other UN processes and bodies. When Member States leave the Commission, national governments could also consider other avenues for continued engagement with the Commission and peacebuilding through Member States' presence in other intergovernmental spaces.

INSTITUTIONALISING SUSTAINING PEACE

To maintain the leadership on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, Member States of the Commission (regardless of their formal role on the Commission), with the support of the Chair, can take leadership on specific issues, such as financing, climate change, and others, including through consultation with civil society experts. The PBC Secretariat should capitalise on using online platforms to connect diverse stakeholders, as well as create determined systems of follow-up and track the Commission's engagement. Moreover, the work of the Commission should become more transparent with advance notice of opportunities for engagement and by positioning the website of the Commission as a platform for systematic research.

ANNEX: ENDNOTES

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Peacebuilding Commission

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