

United Nations  Nations Unies

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3 May 2017

Excellency,

I am writing in reply to your letter of 27 September 2016 in which you requested me to offer substantive inputs to the 2017 High-level Political Forum on the contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016)) recalled the “comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered” vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolutions also noted that security, development and human rights are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing and stressed the importance of the PBC to serve a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities, in line with the respective competencies and responsibilities of these bodies.

In that connection, I would like to submit the following inputs, from a peacebuilding perspective, and according to the headings that you provided.

- (a) an assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level

Violent conflict is one of the serious obstacles to sustainable development. Leaving no one behind requires a particular focus on conflict-affected countries because a significant and increasing share of the extreme poor is living in such countries. This requires not only addressing the root causes and drivers of violent conflict, but also ensuring that progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is made with respect to the marginalized, excluded populations, and difficult to reach.

If the world is to achieve the SDGs by 2030, we will have to focus our efforts among other things on making progress in conflict-affected countries as well. The continued focus by the PBC on this matter is consistent with the agreement reached in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and prioritize on those furthest behind first. Moreover, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda emphasized that “countries in conflict and post-conflict situations also need special attention.”

H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava  
President  
Economic and Social Council

(b) the identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

In today's rapidly evolving, and at times, deteriorating security contexts, addressing root causes of conflicts, is more urgent than ever.

Critical challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in conflict-affected countries include the fragmentation in the support that the UN system provides to Member States, a lack of sustained and adequate financing, and risk aversion among donors. These challenges are recognized in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

More specifically, first, the 2030 Agenda recognized that the interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are critical in ensuring that the purpose of the Agenda is realized. This is an acknowledgement of the complexity, multi-faceted nature and interlinkages of our world, in particular regarding the changing nature of violent conflicts. The 2030 Agenda aims to address the various factors that may drive conflict in many contexts around the world, including socio-economic inequalities, joblessness, inequitable access to social services, climate change, corruption, absence of the rule of law, and weak institutions. The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review adopted in December 2016 recognized the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies and called upon the entities of the UN development system, in full compliance with their respective mandates, to enhance coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding at the national level in countries facing humanitarian emergencies and in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations (A/RES/71/243, para. 24). This has been reflected in the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016)), which also emphasize the bridging and advisory role of the PBC among the principal organs and relevant entities of the UN. The PBC also convenes a broad range of actors outside of the UN, including regional organizations, international financial institutions, and civil society to contribute to coherent actions, among others. The PBC has also started to put into practice elements of the resolutions, such as considering diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of building and sustaining peace.

Second, the aforementioned resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council emphasized "the need for predictable and sustained financing to United Nations peacebuilding activities, including through increased contributions, and strengthened partnerships with key stakeholders." This continues to be a challenge.

Third, providing assistance to conflict-affected countries is risky, and results might be elusive for some time. While there is demand from donor countries for concrete results, measuring peacebuilding results in correlation to financial investment is difficult. It may take a decade or longer to be able to report tangible results on the strengthening of institutions that are critical to build and sustain peace. The international community should remain focused on the long-term objectives of sustainable peace and sustainable development.

(c) valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

Many of those facing poverty and denied prosperity live in conflict-affected countries. To achieve the SDGs by 2030, the international community needs to be better at supporting efforts to reach the furthest behind first (A/RES/70/1, para. 4).

The international community has in recent years been in a state of crisis management, reacting to events rather than proactively addressing the drivers of conflict, and supporting the long-term capacities and institutions that are required for sustainable peace and development. The development of the institutions and capacities to address the needs of all segments of the population, including the most marginalized, takes a long time. On the other hand, by one estimate, the timeframe of donors and assistance programmes has declined from about a decade to one year. This needs to be reversed if we want to reach the SDGs by 2030.

(d) emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity

The rise in violent conflicts and insufficient financial, technical and political support to peacebuilding are serious impediments to the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity. The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture call for better intergovernmental coherence, partnerships, as well as the operational and policy coherence, and invite the Secretary-General to provide options on increasing, restructuring and better prioritizing funding dedicated to UN peacebuilding activities. The PBC provides the platform for partnerships in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace by mobilizing relevant stakeholders, including those that can provide financing. The PBC Annual Session in June 2017 will also focus on this issue.

Building on its previous experiences, the PBC is also working in a flexible way to convene thematic, country-specific and regional discussions, with the consent of all the relevant states concerned, available to all countries seeking sustained international attention and support to their peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. In addition to the rise in violent conflicts, increasing inequality is a major obstacle to the realization of leaving no one behind. Addressing inequalities is not only important for economic growth, development and progress on the SDGs, but also for promoting peace and stability.

The PBC provides a platform for International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the PBC membership to address the interlinkages of rising inequalities in fragile political contexts and the peacebuilding challenges they pose. The commitment to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first requires that the most marginalized and vulnerable people receive priority.

(e) areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

The adoption of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture gave renewed impetus to the United Nations system's focus on peacebuilding and sustaining peace by all actors at all stages of conflict through a comprehensive and coherent approach among relevant political, security and development actors. The resolutions also reaffirm "that development is a central goal

in itself and recognizes the important contributions of the United Nations development system to peacebuilding” ...and stress “the need to continue strengthening cooperation and coordination for that purpose in the field through United Nations Country Teams and at United Nations Headquarters, in accordance with their respective mandates, and with respect for national ownership and priorities of countries-affected by conflict...”.

The Report of the Secretary-General, *Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level* (A/70/684, 15 January 2016, para. 44), notes that “the Economic and Social Council could strengthen its interaction with the Peacebuilding Commission and utilize its operational or humanitarian segments to review development, peace and humanitarian issues as a nexus, thus addressing related aspects of the 2030 Agenda.” In its turn, the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016)) stress “the importance of closer cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with their respective mandates, including through enhanced dialogue in support of promoting coherence and complementarity between the United Nations’ peace and security efforts and its development, human rights and humanitarian work, and encourages the Peacebuilding Commission to draw on the expertise of relevant Economic and Social Council subsidiary bodies, as appropriate.” As a result, ECOSOC and the PBC held a joint meeting in June 2016 on the linkages between sustainable development and sustaining peace. The PBC stands ready to further advance these tasks.

(f) policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication

A number of policy recommendations follow from the above: (a) leave no one behind and focus on those furthest behind also includes focusing on conflict-affected situations; (b) all actors within the UN system need to work together beyond individual silos in order to support peaceful, inclusive, prosperous and sustainable societies; (c) there is a need for predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding activities; (d) emphasis should be placed on longer-term development of institutions and capacities even if they are harder to quantify and as a result timeframes need to increase. To this end, the PBC can play a role in close collaboration with other relevant stakeholders.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Cho Tae-yul  
Chair  
Peacebuilding Commission