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Global catastrophic risks mitigated	Risk multipliers managed	Implementation timeframe
Unknown risks	**Conflict or political violence** **Institutions that lack inclusivity or accountability**	**Short**

Create a strong UN Peacebuilding Council to replace the current Peacebuilding Commission

Similar to the transformation of the Human Rights Commission into a Council, it is time for the UN Peacebuilding Commission to be upgraded into a Council with enhanced powers and responsibilities; and mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in areas not directly addressed by the Security Council.

DETAILS

Similar to the 2005–06 transformation of the UN Human Rights Commission into an empowered Human Rights Council, it is time for the UN Peacebuilding Commission—currently a joint "advisory subsidiary body" to the Security Council and General Assembly—to be upgraded into a Peacebuilding Council with enhanced powers and responsibilities. A new Peacebuilding Council should be mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in areas not directly addressed by the UN Security Council. Without amending the UN Charter, the new Peacebuilding Council could be established as a full subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly, like the Human Rights Council, or as a full subsidiary body of the Security Council, like UN peacekeeping operations and political missions, or both. Another option—with appropriate Charter amendment—is to supplant the long-dormant Trusteeship Council as a principal organ of the United Nations. (The Trusteeship Council's operations were suspended on 1 November 1994, one month after the independence of Palau, the last remaining UN trust territory.) A Peacebuilding Council, as a new principal organ of the United Nations, would focus on countries and regions in non- (and especially "post-") peacekeeping environments, monitoring as well as marshalling collective action to avert the outbreak or recurrence of deadly conflict and tracking closely the UN's system-wide efforts at sustaining peace.

As presently structured, the Peacebuilding Commission has made some important strides, including through innovating various engagements with countries emerging from conflict and a flexible and streamlined integrated peacebuilding strategy instrument that aims to better help host countries address and resolve deadly conflict. However, it continues to fall short of delivery in its core mandated areas, and its tenure has coincided with a tripling of major violent conflicts. Two central questions are: should real authority be invested in this body, and what is an acceptable division of responsibility with the Security Council?

In light of the difficulties in achieving a more representative Security Council, an empowered Peacebuilding Council would allow more capable UN Member States to contribute directly to the UN's primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security. It should be entrusted with a conflict prevention mandate operationalized through

a new “Peacebuilding Audit” tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) instrument for tracking the human rights situation of all UN Member States. As with the UPR, all countries would participate periodically in such audits of early warning indicators, supported in some cases by the rigorous work of UN special rapporteurs. This would be consistent with current efforts to track the ten targets and associated indicators of all countries’ progress toward meeting their commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).

Incorporating several recommendations from the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the 2016 UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council’s resolutions on the Peacebuilding Architecture, the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, and subsequent UN High-Level Meeting on that subject, the proposed transformation of the Peacebuilding Commission into a Peacebuilding Council could garner support in the run-up to the September 2020 Leaders Summit. Supportive venues could include ongoing discussions in the Peacebuilding Commission’s Organizational Committee, and supportive countries and organizations including current and recent Commission chairs and vice-chairs (Colombia, Romania, Egypt, Germany, and the Republic of Korea), the Executive-Office of the Secretary-General, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the larger non-governmental peacebuilding community. The new Peacebuilding Council will absorb all costs associated with the current Peacebuilding Commission and Trusteeship Council.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Enhancing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

Moving “soft security” issues to front and center of the Peacebuilding Council’s agenda, instead of behind hard security issues prioritized by the Security Council at the expense of the former allows for a better accountability in governance. It also goes in the direction of allowing more member states outside of the P5 group to participate and be involved in discussions linked to national, regional, and global security. The Council should be entrusted with a conflict prevention mandate operationalized through a new “Peacebuilding Audit” tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) instrument for tracking the human rights situation of all UN Member States. As with the UPR, all countries would participate periodically in such audits of early warning indicators, supported in some cases by the rigorous work of UN special rapporteurs.

Conversing effect in increasing poverty and inequality

None identified.

Reducing conflict and political violence

Although the Peacebuilding Commission’s integrated strategies have evolved in the right direction, significant room remains for improvement: focusing on no more than four to five conflict drivers and adopting more concrete, time-

bound, and measurable benchmarks of progress. This would also make the new Peacebuilding Council attractive to conflict-affected countries beyond Sub-Saharan Africa and enhance its accompaniment functions in direct support of a host country's peace process, as well as longer-term post-conflict peacebuilding. It would also encourage the development of new prevention tools that could serve as an important early warning function for the Peacebuilding Council and the Security Council. Allowing for the development of a chamber dealing with issues which could be addressed before it evolves into a challenge requiring the Security Council's attention will enhance the chances for tensions to be diffused early on.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Implementation strategy

Without amending the UN Charter, the new Peacebuilding Council could be established as a full subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly, like the Human Rights Council, or as a full subsidiary body of the Security Council, like UN peacekeeping operations and political missions, or both. Another option—with appropriate Charter amendment—is to supplant the long-dormant Trusteeship Council as a principal organ of the United Nations. A Peacebuilding Council, as a new principal organ of the United Nations, would focus on countries and regions in non- (and especially "post-") peacekeeping environments, monitoring as well as marshalling collective action to avert the outbreak or recurrence of deadly conflict and tracking closely the UN's system-wide efforts at sustaining peace.

The immediate goal is to empower the Council, possibly through increased linkages with the Peacebuilding Fund, to expand its scope of operations to include prevention and mediation efforts. These efforts could represent initial steps toward establishing the Peacebuilding Council as one of the principal organs within the UN working to advance peace and security worldwide. P5 Member States as well as the Security Council as an institution might oppose the constitution of the Peacebuilding Council on the grounds that it would duplicate its existence and compete with its prerogatives. However, the Security Council would maintain its current role and focus on hard security issues, while issues of "soft security"—such as climate change, human rights, and conflict prevention—would be under the purview of the PBC. Finally, the new Peacebuilding Council will absorb all costs associated with the current Peacebuilding Commission and Trusteeship Council.

Political will exists to realise this proposal

A broad range of decision makers and implementers are identified and would come into play with respect to the Peacebuilding Commission evolving into a Peacebuilding Council. First, the United Nations Security Council, as the strategic entity on all matters security will be mobilized, with the P5 especially concerned (United States of America, France, United Kingdom, People's Republic of China, and Russia). The United Nations General Assembly would be mobilized to harness support for the proposal as well. A number of specific member states have a stake in the issue, such as Sub-Saharan states (Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Mali, Central African Republic, etc.), and more generally conflict-affected states. Finally, the Peacebuilding Commission's Organizational Committee, and supportive countries and

organizations including current and recent Commission chairs and vice-chairs (Colombia, Romania, Egypt, Germany, and the Republic of Korea), the Executive-Office of the Secretary-General, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the larger non-governmental peacebuilding community would be concerned by the proposal.

In consultation with (and beyond countries currently on the agenda of) the Security Council, both the Peacebuilding Council and the Secretary-General should determine a country's suitability for a peacebuilding audit. The UN Peacebuilding Fund, as a vehicle for prevention, also holds promise. In 2008, PBF resource were allocated to a clear-cut instance of prevention in Guinea (Conakry), thereby setting an important precedent in a country without a UN mission presence at the time. As a tool created in 2006, the PBF represents one of the possible options for the Peacebuilding Council to be realized using existing frameworks and processes, as well as existing working institutions in the UN system. Finally the proposed Peacebuilding Council would absorb all costs currently associated with the Peacebuilding Commission as well as the Trusteeship Council, making it particularly cost-effective in relation to the current UN budget.

What if political will does not exist yet

The new Peacebuilding Council could further serve as an appropriate contemporary replacement for the Trusteeship Council as a principal organ of the United Nations (given its shared commitment to responsible sovereignty-building in fragile states). The international trusteeship system, which the Trusteeship Council is entrusted to oversee, came to an end in 1994 when Palau became the 185th UN Member State. Giving the newly proposed Peacebuilding Council a conflict prevention mandate would encourage the development of new prevention tools, such as peacebuilding audits—similar to the Human Rights Council's country reporting mechanism, the Universal Periodic Review— that could serve as an important early warning function for the Peacebuilding Council and the Security Council. As these tools already exist within constructed frameworks in the United Nations system, the impact of adjustments to be made at the internal level would be at best overwhelmingly positive, at worse minimal.

MITIGATING RISKS

Mitigating unknown risks

As presently structured, the Peacebuilding Commission has made some important strides, including through innovating various engagements with countries emerging from conflict and a flexible and streamlined integrated peacebuilding strategy instrument that aims to better help host countries address and resolve deadly conflict. However, it continues to fall short of delivery in its core mandated areas, and its tenure has coincided with a tripling of major violent conflicts.

In light of the difficulties in achieving a more representative Security Council, an empowered Peacebuilding Council would allow more capable UN Member States to contribute directly to the UN's primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security. It should be entrusted with a conflict prevention mandate operationalized through a new "Peacebuilding Audit" tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) instrument

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