

Title

Giving the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) a More Prominent Role at the UN Peace and Security Architecture

Description

Being the only UN body with a cross-pillar coordination mandate, the PBC must be given a more prominent role in the UN peace and security architecture. In the past few years, there has been growing consensus that the UN should seek to address the root causes of crises, instead of reacting to them. To keep the process moving, it is necessary to 1) enhance the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues, such as the WPS and YPS agendas; 2) strengthen the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council, particularly with regards to peacebuilding elements of missions' mandates, as well as during reconfigurations, drawdowns, and transitions; 3) bolster the PBC's advisory role to the Economic and Social Council, with a view to promote greater coherence amongst development and peacebuilding actors in the field.

Timeframe

Short – 5 years

Details

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is the only UN body with a cross-pillar coordination mandate. In the past few years, there has been growing consensus that the UN should seek to address the root causes of complex crises rather than reacting after conflict has already been triggered. To give the PBC a more prominent role in the UN peace and security architecture, three interconnected processes must take place:

1. Enhancing the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues, such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, as well as the role of natural resources in conflict;
2. Strengthening the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council (UNSC), particularly with regards to peacebuilding elements of missions' mandates, as well as during reconfigurations, drawdowns, and transitions; and
3. Bolstering the PBC's advisory role to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a view to promote greater coherence among development and peacebuilding actors in the field.

The [UN Peace and Security Reform](#), led by the Secretary General (UNSG), provided new capacities and skills to the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) since the regional desks (e.g. Americas) and specialized structures (e.g. Security Sector Reform) now also support the work of the PBA. For instance, it enables PBC delegates to have more access to information in order to hold more substantive discussions. Albeit this progress is very relevant, it is only one step towards a longer process of strengthening the PBA. The 2020 Review of the PBA is an opportunity to continue giving the PBC a more prominent role by enhancing its capacities to host discussions and strengthening its advisory role to the UNSC and to the ECOSOC.

RATIONALE

There are five main rationales behind the proposal of giving the PBC a more prominent role. First, the UNSC tends to focus its attention in crisis situations, and usually multilateral interventions take place when it is already too late to prevent them from happening in the first place. The necessity to shift from crisis-oriented approach to longer-term engagement has a broad consensus within the UN headquarters. Indeed, the PBC was created in 2005 to address serious gap holes in the UN engagement with peace and security. The main one is the [attention gap](#): the international community does not pay attention to longer-term processes of recovery.

Second, there are thematic restrictions on the UNSC's mandate. While the Council can dispatch missions when it considers that there is a threat to international peace and security, it is not responsible for coordinating UN agencies and development actors in the field. Alternatively, the PBC has a convening power to coordinate different actors: it can provide a platform of inclusive dialogue, bringing development actors, civil society, financial institutions, private sector, and others together. Therefore, the PBC emerges as a better option to host the debate of topics that do not affect in a straight-forward and direct manner international peace and security. It is more apt to address most of the conceptual and thematic topics in the international security agenda, such as WPS, YPS, and structural prevention.

Third, the UNSC's membership is limited, while the PBC is more democratic. The Commission not only has more than two times (31) as much members as the Council (15) but also brings countries that are willing to make a substantive contribution to global peace. For instance, currently, Canada, Norway, and Ireland are members of the PBC, but compete for only two seats at the UNSC in 2021. In addition, the European Union and the largest T/PCCs are among PBC's members. Hence, the PBC helps to mitigate the "representation gap" of the UN Peace and Security Architecture. One can expect that the significance and inclusiveness of PBC's representativeness could also empower the weight of its political recommendations.

Fourth, the PBC has assumed an increasingly fundamental role in the UN's peace and security architecture, as it has a unique transversal advisory mandate. It is capable of making recommendations to the UNSC, the ECOSOC, and the General Assembly (UNGA). In the field, it usually dialogues more easily with the actors involved in a process—from national authorities and resident coordinators to financial institutions (for instance, see [the peace process in CAR](#)).

Finally, during the last years, the UNSG has echoed that, to become more efficient and effective, the UN should give priority to conflict prevention. Guterres' objectives have been to promote channels of communication, fostering synergies between the different thematic branches of the UN, which should no longer function as isolated silos. In order to provide a conceptual framework for his vision for the UN, Guterres began to actively promote concepts of a transversal nature, such as "sustaining peace" and "structural prevention." The Secretary-General has also promoted a growing role of articulation and coordination to PBC by highlighting the importance of the links between the different pillars of the Organization, which

has been called "double-hinge role" of the Commission. Therefore, the PBC's unique transversal advisory mandate enables it to lead concertation efforts and the promotion of synergies in the UN headquarters and the field.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

How will this proposal enhance inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance?

Moving some discussions from the Security Council to the Peacebuilding Commission will contribute to employing peaceful and development tools to promote peace objectives. Moreover, the peace and security debate will be more inclusive and more national governments will be accountable.

Could aspects of this proposal have the converse effect in increasing poverty and inequality?

Probably not, although the risk of unintended consequences always exists. The proposal was designed taking into account the risks for the poor and inequalities within and across countries. According to the UN-WB Report, *Pathways for Peace* (2018), preventing conflict is critical to ending extreme poverty not only for promoting shared prosperity but also because violent conflict perpetuates poverty.

How will this proposal reduce conflict and political violence?

Taking preventive action and addressing possible root causes of conflict before the outbreak of violence is considerably cheaper for the international community than intervening during or after violence occurs (UN and WB, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018)

THEORY OF CHANGE

How would your proposal take effect? Describe the obstricals, for example political, institutional, financial or other, that stand in the way of your proposal and explain how each of these obstacles can be overcome. (Implementation Strategy)

To continue and strengthen the processes of giving the PBC a more prominent role in the UN peace and security architecture, we provide the following menu of possible strategies for each process:

Enhance the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues. The PBC is more suitable for hosting in-depth discussions on the WPS, YPS and other cross-cutting agendas. Grass-roots initiatives, progress, lessons learned, challenges would receive more attention at the PBC than currently at the UNSC.

- 1) **Redirect UNSC's briefers to the PBC.** Each peace mission and theme on the UNSC agenda receives periodic reports from the UNSG and then briefing meetings are held.

Once this information is of public interest, it would be better to transfer them progressively to PBC.

- 2) **Strengthen relations with ECOSOC.** If PBC's advisory role to the ECOSOC is strengthened in the 2020 Review, as suggested further, it will also enable the PBC to host more cross-cutting dialogues that are connected to economic and social development.
- 3) **Encourage countries to request PBC's advise.** The Commission can advise and host discussions on any country that requests its assistance.

Strengthen the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council. This is particularly important when peacebuilding elements of missions' mandates are at stake, as well as during reconfigurations, drawdowns, and transitions. PBC member states have shown a growing appetite for influencing the drafting of these mandates.

- 1) **Expand PBC's participation in the negotiation of PKO and SPM mandates by excluding "upon request/requests for advice/at its request" in the 2020 PBA Review.** The first time this formally happened was at the last renewal of MINUSCA's mandate at the end of 2018 (See S/PRST/2018/20). However, the CAR was also on the PBC agenda. Hence, to systematically include inputs from the PBC in other peace operations' mandates, the 2020 Review should establish that the Commission can provide advice to every peace operations determined by the Council without the necessity of the request.
- 2) **Alternatively, UNSC's members should regularly request PBC advise by strengthening OP 8 UNGA 70/262 and UNSC 2282(2016).** The UNSC should include "to request PBC advice/invites the PBC to send its advice" in peacekeeping operations and special political missions' mandates. In operative paragraph 8 of the twin resolutions on sustaining peace, the UNSC underlined its intention of regularly request, deliberate and draw upon the specific, strategic, and targeted advice of the PBC. Moreover, there are supportive UNSC members of receiving PBC's input when peacebuilding tasks are concerned in peace operations mandates.
- 3) **Enhance the meetings between PBC and UNSC's Committees, Working Groups and Ad Hoc Bodies.** Currently, there are no linkages between PBC and UNSC's structures working on the same country or similar topics. For instance, there is no regular meetings between the Sanctions Committee on CAR and the CAR configuration of the PBC. The 2020 Review should recommend regular meetings between them.

Bolster the PBC's advisory role to ECOSOC. This will promote greater coherence among development and peacebuilding actors in the headquarters and the field.

- 1) **Increase the dialogues between the PBC and the ECOSOC by promoting joint meetings.** In recent years, there were joint meetings to address [climate change in the Sahel](#) and [Agenda 2030](#). To continue this process, and to increase it in scope and substance, the number of joint meetings to foster dialogues between the two bodies, Chairpersons should take advantage of ECOSOC Resolutions 2009/32, 2008/30, and 2020/L.3.
- 2) **Increase the cooperation between PBC and ECOSOC by using the Commission as a platform to bring attention to certain economic and social issues,** particularly economic drivers and risks to peace. Resolution 2020/L.3 calls PBC in its advisory role to

ECOSOC in the Sahel region to use of its platform to sustain international attention to the region, particularly bringing the different actors together, such as Member States, UN system, and international financial institutions.

- 3) **Enhance dialogue between ECOSOC and the Chairpersons of the Commission's country-specific configurations.** ECOSOC Resolution 2009/32 paragraph 3 provides precedent for strengthening this cooperation. Chairpersons and delegates should take advantage of it.

This proposal is in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the 2020 Review of the PBA, as they are forward looking and aim at continuing to strengthen the PBA. Therefore, to improve PBC's coherence across the three pillars and with all relevant partners, UNSC, ECOSOC, UNSG, and UNGA should incorporate the above recommendations.

To what extent does political will currently exists to realise your proposal?

As mentioned in the implementation box, the process of strengthening the PBC is already happening. There is political will among not only members of the PBC but also the Security Council. Moreover, the timing is now, as the 2020 Review of the PBCA kicked off.

To the extent that political will does not yet exist, how will you create it and how long do expect it to take?

Permanent Council members have traditionally viewed the strengthening of the PBC with suspicion, pointing to the risk of "encroachment" of Council issues by the Commission. Nevertheless, the historical trend of these reform processes that take place every 5 years has been one of increasing strength.