

## Strengthening the impact of the Peacebuilding Commission at the field level - ideas and opportunities for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

31 October 2024

*Summary Note*

### **Background:**

The Peacebuilding Commission (the Commission hereafter) has become a critical forum and platform that Member States can utilize to receive coherent support for their peacebuilding priorities. In a time of deep polarization and blockages in the Security Council, the Commission's platform becomes an even more important space for Member States to seek support for their national peacebuilding and prevention priorities, efforts and strategies. Yet, challenges remain in translating discussions within the Commission into meaningful impact at the country and regional level.

The need to enhance the role of the Commission in bringing “a more strategic approach and greater coherence and impact to national and international peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts” was recently highlighted in [the Pact for the Future](#) (the Pact hereafter), adopted by Member States in September 2024. Article 44 of the Pact outlines Member States' commitment to strengthen the Commission through the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR). The language adopted in the Pact presents an opportunity to enable the Commission to better support nationally-led prevention and sustaining peace efforts and strategies.

This roundtable invited Member States, UN partners and civil society peacebuilding experts to discuss how momentum generated in negotiations on the Pact can be used to strengthen the impact of the Commission's work at regional and country level. The discussion in particular explored ideas, viewpoints and pathways for the Commission to continue supporting nationally-led efforts and strategies to prevent conflict and sustain peace, as well as ways to strengthen linkages between the UN peacebuilding architecture and the work of UN Country Teams.

### **The key takeaways from the discussion include the following points:**

**Past PBARs have highlighted the limited systematic analysis, understanding and documentation of the impact of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, especially the Commission, at the country level.** This raises questions about the need to clarify and more effectively communicate the Commission's role within the broader UN system for prevention and peacebuilding. The 2025 PBAR presents an opportunity for Member States to revisit past PBAR recommendations<sup>1</sup>, assess why they have not been implemented, and explore targeted

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<sup>1</sup> See matrix of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review recommendations developed by the NYU's Center on International Cooperation at: <https://cic.nyu.edu/data/peacebuilding-architecture-review-matrix-of-recommendations/>

recommendations and actions for enhancing the impact of the Commission's work at the field level.

**The engagement of UN Country Teams and other UN representatives at the country level in peacebuilding remains largely ad-hoc and project-oriented, lacking a strategic and sustained approach.** Sustaining peace requires coordinated and empowered UN leadership at the country and regional levels, a clear peacebuilding strategy and adequate capacities in peacebuilding and conflict analysis (i.e., the presence of peacebuilding or peace and development advisors (PDAs)). The assumption that all UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Resident Coordinator (RC) Offices inherently focus on peacebuilding is flawed, and they often lack the necessary expertise and resources to do so. Recent PBARs have emphasised the insufficient capacity for peacebuilding at the country level, compounded by recent cuts to funding for PDAs. While the double or triple-hat role<sup>2</sup> of many RCs offers potential for advancing the nexus between peace, development, humanitarian and human rights actions, it also strains peacebuilding efforts due to limited capacity. There could further be more coordination on peacebuilding and prevention efforts between RC Offices and UNCTs, including in the development of Common Country Analyses (CCAs) that the Commission can later use to inform its discussions. [GPPAC's research](#) underscores the lack of awareness within country offices of the Commission's impact and relevance to the work at the field level. There is little systematic follow up to the Commission's advice and recommendations by RC Offices and UNCTs. Mechanisms that hold UN leaders accountable for peacebuilding actions should be reviewed and strengthened. In parallel, RCs need to be supported in advancing peacebuilding and sustaining peace including through the roles of a PDA and/or peacebuilding advisor funded out of the core funding provided to RCOs to ensure proper support.

**The interaction between the Commission and UN field presences should be improved.** There is a need for more systematic and sustained partnerships between the Commission, the Development Cooperation Office (DCO), and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), particularly in relation to contexts going through transitions. Increased engagement of RCs in the work of the Commission could enhance the peacebuilding focus within UNCTs, fostering coordination across UN entities. For example, in the context of MONUSCO's disengagement in the DRC, collaboration between the Commission and the RC Office could improve coherence and coordination among diverse stakeholders, ensuring a smooth transition. It will be crucial to follow up on how RC Offices act on the Commission's advice and how the Commission takes up input from the RC.

**Member States serving on the Commission could strengthen coherence and effective engagement between the work of the Commission and the UN development system.** First, the 2025 PBAR should be closely linked to implementation of the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution ([A/RES/79/226](#)), ensuring greater alignment of operational frameworks. Specifically, it can help clarify the role of the RCs in peacebuilding and reduce silos between the development and peacebuilding action of the UN. Second, there is room for enhancing cooperation between the Commission and ECOSOC, as the two bodies currently have limited interaction. Specifically, there is space to integrate peacebuilding into ECOSOC work,

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<sup>2</sup> Refers to UN Resident Coordinators having additional roles as Humanitarian Coordinator (double hat) and Deputy Special Representatives of the SG (triple hat - relevant in mission contexts).

and this opportunity should be seized. Increased collaboration through expert exchanges, including through Informal Interactive Dialogues (IIDs), could foster better coordination and impact. This would require increased engagement and action by the informal coordinator within the Commission who has particular responsibility for fostering the Commission's relationships with ECOSOC. For this, Member States need to ensure internal coherence between their activities in the Commission, other intergovernmental bodies, the board of the UN's agencies, funds and programmes and broader development cooperation.

**The Commission should continue strengthening financing for peacebuilding through its convening capacity.** While the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) remains essential, its resources are insufficient to support comprehensive peacebuilding efforts. To address this gap, the Commission must engage other financial stakeholders, such as International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the private sector. Improving the quality of financing is equally important. In that regard, there is an opportunity to explore how the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) could facilitate discussions on peacebuilding financing with a diversity of stakeholders. Again, the internal coordination within donor countries is required to ensure that those sitting on boards of IFIs and Regional Development Banks (RDBs) can support the engagement of these respective entities with the Commission.

**The Commission's advice to the UNSC and other intergovernmental bodies needs to be more strategic, focused and informed by diverse knowledge<sup>3</sup>.** Currently, the advice provided by the Commission is rather general and based on agreed language. To improve the advice it provides, the Commission could concentrate on a smaller number of geographic and thematic areas, fostering expertise in these fields. Engaging civil society more systematically and developing some form of [a Global Research Advisory Panel/Network](#) could provide diverse perspectives and knowledge. Peacebuilding experts of Member States, with the support of civil society, could also arrange meetings with relevant experts working at the field level, including local experts, ahead of the Commission's formal meetings that can help formulate advice. Additionally, appointing a Vice-Chair to be responsible for knowledge, learning, and adaptation could enhance the Commission's ability to offer targeted and informed advice. The Commission could exercise its convening role to elicit more expertise from academia, think tanks and civil society organisations. The Commission's Chair could brief the Security Council more often, following on the momentum in this direction in 2024. Finally, there should be a mechanism for follow-up on how the Commission's advice is used by a respective intergovernmental body. This mechanism could build on the development of the Peacebuilding Impact Hub and requires additional capacity on part of the Commission's Secretariat to collect and compile relevant data.

**There is a need to clarify what type of specific knowledge is useful for the Commission.** This would help to inform the continued development of the aforementioned Peacebuilding Impact Hub administered by PBSO to become a more strategic resource and help other knowledge holders to prepare relevant input. This includes integrating local and multidimensional knowledge on peacebuilding, particularly from affected communities. Moreover, having space to

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<sup>3</sup> Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). October 2024. Improving the impact of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and enhancing the synergy of the Peacebuilding Architecture - Input Paper for the 2025 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. <https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/improving-the-impact-of-the-un-peacebuilding-commission-and-enhancing-the-synergy-of-the-peacebuilding-architecture-input-paper-for-the-2025>.

discuss and share examples and understanding on where and why certain peacebuilding efforts have not delivered results is crucial for refining future strategies.

**The following main recommendations emerged from the discussion:**

- **Revisit Past PBAR Recommendations:** Member States, with the support of the PBC Secretariat, should revisit previous PBAR reports to identify recommendations that are still relevant and why recommendations that aim to strengthen the impact of the Commission's work at the field level have not been implemented. Building on this, new and targeted recommendations should be developed.
- **Strengthen Strategic and Coordinated Engagement in the Field:** The outcomes of the 2025 PBAR should foster coordinated, empowered UN leadership at country and regional levels with clear peacebuilding strategies and sufficient capacities, including peacebuilding advisors or PDAs. Mechanisms that hold UN leaders accountable for peacebuilding actions should be reviewed and strengthened.
- **Enhance the Commission's engagement with UN field presences:** The Commission should engage RC Offices in its discussions more systematically, especially on meetings that have a country-specific focus. It will be crucial to follow up on how RC Offices act on the Commission's advice and how the Commission utilises input from RCs.
- **Increase Awareness of Peacebuilding Processes at the Field Level:** The PBSO, in partnership with DCO, should raise awareness within UN country offices about the relevance of the Commission's work at the field level to improve the possibilities for collaboration.
- **Improve linkages with other relevant processes:** The 2025 PBAR should build on [the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review \(QCPR\)](#) process that concluded with GA resolution [A/RES/79/226](#), ensuring greater alignment of operational frameworks.
- **Enhancing cooperation between the Commission and ECOSOC:** The informal coordinator of the Commission's relationship with ECOSOC ought to work with other Member States to facilitate more expert exchanges to bridge the silos between development and peacebuilding, including through IIDs.
- **Enhance Financing for Peacebuilding:** The Commission should develop a strategy for the engagement of IFIs, RDBs and the private sector. Bilateral donors should foster internal coordination of their work in the Commission, the PBF, and broader development cooperation. Further, the 2025 PBAR outcome document should highlight the need to strengthen the quality of financing.
- **Improve the Strategic Focus of the Commission's Advice:** The Commission should provide more focused and expert advice to the UNSC and other intergovernmental bodies by concentrating on specific geographic and thematic areas, engaging civil society, and appointing a Vice-Chair for knowledge, learning, and adaptation. Peacebuilding experts of Member States, with the support of civil society, could arrange meetings with relevant experts working at the field level, including local experts, ahead of the Commission's formal meetings that can help develop advice. Finally, there should be a mechanism for follow-up on how the Commission's advice was used by a respective intergovernmental body.
- **Clarify Knowledge Needs for the Commission:** Member States should define the types of knowledge most useful to the Commission, integrate local and multidimensional

perspectives on peacebuilding, and focus on learning from both successful and unsuccessful peacebuilding efforts.