

Supporting National Ownership through a Strengthened Peacebuilding Commission - Ideas and Opportunities for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

27 February 2025 | 8:30am-10:00am

A Discussion of the Operationalising Sustaining Peace Roundtable Series

Summary Note

While the responsibility for ‘identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace’ rests with national governments through inclusive national ownership ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282](#), PP9), the Peacebuilding Commission (the Commission hereafter) has become a critical forum and platform that Member States can utilise to receive coherent support for their peacebuilding priorities. The 2024 UN Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace ([A/79/552-S/2024/767](#)) underscores the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in promoting national ownership and facilitating inclusive approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. In a time of deep polarisation and blockages in the Security Council, the Commission’s platform is 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 ensuring that the work of the Commission is translated into meaningful impact at the country and regional level.

Unpacking the commitment of Member States on ‘strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission’ made in [the Pact for the Future](#) (Action 44) is a critical step in making the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025 PBAR) an effective process. To support this goal, this roundtable provided space to discuss recommendations raised by Member States made during [a December 2024 workshop](#) for strengthening the Commission.¹ Specifically, the discussion explored recommendations for strengthening the Commission’s ability to support national ownership in peacebuilding and enhance national peacebuilding processes.

Key takeaways from the discussion include the following:

Member States often do not have enough understanding of the value proposition of the Commission, leading to a lack of engagement or limited engagement with the body. Despite the

¹ The workshop was held on 9-10 December 2024 at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, New York and organised by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Life & Peace Institute, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), in partnership with the Global Challenges Foundation and with co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Australia, Colombia, Norway, and the Republic of Korea. A workshop summary can be found [here](#).

Commission's work resting on the principle of national ownership and it being voluntary for Member States to approach the Commission, Member States remain concerned about being assessed or stigmatised as a result of being discussed as part of its agenda. There are several Member States (e.g. Sierra Leone, Canada, the Gambia, Timor-Leste) that have communicated positively about their engagement with the Commission, identifying how it was useful in reinforcing peacebuilding processes in their countries. Commission Member States and Member States that have received support from the Commission could more actively work to promote these good practices and dispel the stigma of the Commission.

The Commission could further leverage its convening power and bridging role to facilitate diverse input for Member States in developing and implementing comprehensive national prevention and peacebuilding strategies. The Commission can bring together the donor community, independent experts, local civil society, and regional organisations among others to generate support for national prevention and peacebuilding efforts. The Commission could also more explicitly serve as a platform to facilitate South-South and Triangular cooperation, enabling learning and knowledge exchange between different contexts. Examples such as a 2020 meeting that facilitated learning and exchange between Colombia, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia or one in 2024 that convened Norway, Timor-Leste and Kenya could serve as precedent. Further, the Commission could encourage more conversations on peacebuilding at the country level with UN Resident Coordinator's Offices playing a central role. Commission Member States could also utilize their own structures, for example embassies in countries on the Commission's agenda, to advance conversations at the national level that can then feed into discussions in New York.

The Commission can play a complementary role to the work of the Security Council (UNSC) by supporting countries that are not facing imminent security risk, countries in transitions, and other under-prioritised contexts. In this regard, the Commission stands out as providing a platform for engagement by Member States based on their own terms and resting on the principle of national ownership. The Commission can be helpful in increasing the international attention that a country receives before facing imminent security risks and being placed on the UN Security Council's Agenda, as well as to bring awareness to under-prioritised contexts. Participants highlighted that the Commission could facilitate thinking on longer term holistic prevention and peacebuilding approaches.

The Commission can support deliberations on how to incorporate peacebuilding components within peacekeeping missions and the development of a framework for transitions. In this regard, there is a need to strengthen formal coordination between the Commission and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34). The Commission can also provide advice to the Security Council ahead of mandate renewals, as it did in the case of the renewal of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). To fulfil this role requires that the Commission strengthens its analytical capacity in preparing a timely advice to the Security Council.

The Security Council could also more actively engage with the Commission and make its expectations of the Commission's work and role more explicit.

The Commission could strengthen its capacity to support inclusive national ownership through increased and more quality engagement of civil society and local peacebuilders.

Commission Member States often cover several thematic issues and do not always have expertise on each context that is discussed at the Commission. Civil society, including local organisations and national think tanks, brings needed technical and contextual knowledge. Pre-sessions organised by civil society could enable Commission Member States to have a deeper understanding of peacebuilding contexts, priorities and needs and thus ensure a more impactful conversation within the Commission. Regular interaction with civil society networks could also strengthen the Commission's understanding of national peacebuilding processes and the perspectives of local peacebuilding actors. Pre-sessions with local peacebuilders, when developed with proper security protocols, would allow Member States to hear additional voices and perspectives ahead of formal Commission meetings. It is also important to recognise that civil society may need more time to agree on key messages within their networks and to prepare statements. Finally, feedback loops that provide information on deliberations back to civil society and local actors allow civil society to feel that their perspectives have been considered.

More sustained engagement with Member States who have requested support from the Commission is needed, including through enhanced linkages with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

Somalia last came to the Commission in 2020 during the period of the PBF re-eligibility process. It would be timely for Somalia to engage with the Commission to share updates and identify gaps that can be supported in the next PBF cycle. However, the value of such sporadic engagement is unclear as well as what factors may encourage more regular engagement with the Commission. More active follow up on the impact throughout the life of PBF-funded projects could be explored, including the possibility of bringing partners and beneficiaries from these projects to speak to the Commission. In Somalia, where civil society organisations are essential for the delivery of humanitarian response, the PBF has for example funded local organisations under the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative and the Commission could serve as a platform to share lessons from the impact of these investments.

The Commission could enhance its engagement with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Resident Coordinators (RCs).

The role of the Development Cooperation Office (DCO) is critical to advancing the UN's work on peacebuilding and prevention at the country level. Despite some references to sustaining peace in the recent Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution, it continues to be complicated to introduce language on sustaining peace in discussions on the UN Development System and vice versa. One way to overcome this disconnect is to encourage more coordination across the UN System on sustaining peace and to reinforce feedback loops between country and HQ level. Implementation of the UN Funding Compact including country level dialogues are a possible mechanism to advance this aim. Longer or more frequent country visits by a few key actors representing Commission Member States, as opposed to bigger delegations that come for shorter visits, could be explored for the Commission to build relationships with RC Offices and UN

Country Teams. Member States also expressed that to better understand how the Commission can support UNCTs, it would be useful to hear from UNCTs that have limited peacebuilding capacity.

The Commission should enhance its engagement with regional organisations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), regional development banks and the private sector. While the Commission has engaged regional actors, it could do more to connect to the conversations taking place at the regional level. For example, it could engage in ongoing discussions about the AU's renewed Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy. By engaging IFIs, regional development banks and private sector actors, the Commission can also leverage its convening capacity to support financing for inclusive national peacebuilding priorities. One challenge in engaging with diverse financial actors is that they work with different frameworks, often participate in different policy fora, and use different terminology to communicate their priorities. More is needed to understand how to enhance and further operationalise this engagement.

Strengthening the Commission also requires enhanced support from the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). As the Secretariat of the Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office provides both technical and thematic expertise. A stronger PBSO could for example support the Commission in producing more nuanced and comprehensive political advice, informed by diverse stakeholders; measure the outcomes and relevance of the Commission's advice; assess and communicate its value proposition to Member States and stakeholders more effectively; and document 'good practices' and key precedents in the PBC's operations. Funding cuts to the UN System make it more challenging for PBSO to adequately support the Commission in fulfilling its mandate.

The following main recommendations emerged from the discussion:

- The Commission should increase the awareness of its value proposition among Member States, both in capitals and at UNHQ. Commission Member States and Member States that have received support from the Commission could more actively work to promote good practices and dispel the stigma of being discussed at the Commission. The Commission could also more regularly follow up with countries receiving support from the Peacebuilding Fund.
- Commission Member States should engage in pre-sessions organised by civil society to enhance understanding of the context, needs and priorities of local communities. The Commission should utilise or, as necessary, create new feedback loops that provide information on the impact of its recommendations back to civil society.
- The Commission should continue to provide a platform for exchange and learning between different contexts and to facilitate South-South and Triangular cooperation.

- The Commission should strengthen its advisory capacity to the UNSC and enhance coordination with the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, including to support countries in transition and ahead of mandate renewals.
- The Commission can increase its engagement at the national level through Member State embassies in countries on the Commission's agenda, as well as through regular and more impactful field visits on the invitation from the government.
- The Commission could enhance its engagement with UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators to reinforce important contributions of the UN Development System to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Similarly, more complementarity between peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the development system is required.
- The Commission should develop a strategy for the engagement of IFIs, regional development banks and the private sector to advance financing of inclusive national peacebuilding and prevention strategies.
- Implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agendas and strengthening the capacity of the Commission will require strengthening of and adequate funding for the Peacebuilding Support Office and to the entire UN system.