

PBC Chair's remarks
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Building strong institutions for sustainable development in conflict-affected countries

Thank you for the invitation to speak about this very important topic, which has been at the heart of the Commission's *raison d'être* since its establishment in 2005. Its founding resolutions call for "attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development." The 2016 twin resolutions reiterated the critical role of institution building for lasting peace and sustainable development.

I recently represented the Peacebuilding Commission at the second edition of the "Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development" in Cairo, where the need to prioritize institution building in conflict-affected countries was emphasized, particularly in view of the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forum recognized that the pandemic has exacerbated governance gaps across the African continent affecting the health, economic and social sectors causing additional strains on social cohesion with implications for the peace and security landscape, most notably through exploitation by armed groups and terrorist organizations. During the deliberations, there was wide recognition that the peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts requires attention to addressing root causes. The Forum concluded that, to lay the foundations for rebuilding better African societies and economies, crisis preparedness must be integrated into national policies and systems. In line with the notion of national ownership, governments must invest in building resilient and viable institutions at the national and local levels while promoting inclusive governance through a whole-of-government approach.

The Commission has been addressing institution building challenges through its country, regional and thematic engagements. The Commission has created space for national governments to seek opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) that contributes to building and sustaining peace. In addition, since the outset of the pandemic, the Commission has created space for representatives of local level institutions and civil society organizations to present the steep challenges that they face in building and sustaining peace in areas where COVID-19 further strains already over-stretched resources and exacerbates multiple pressures spurred by rapid urbanization, concentrated poverty, and social instability. The United Nations estimates that local governments' revenue globally will lower by 15-25 percent in 2021, undermining public service delivery, infrastructure investments, and sustainable development – just as the need for health, water, sanitation, education and economic development is at an all-time high. COVID-19 has also highlighted the need for inclusive and gender responsive institution building as women are among those most significantly affected while serving on the frontlines of the pandemic response and ongoing peacebuilding efforts.

In the context of the 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, the Commission held an electronic consultation on institution-building and system-wide engagement for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which served as input to the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The report (A/74/976–S/2020/773) expressed serious concerns over the uneven nature of national advances in strengthening institutions, while emphasizing that effective, accountable, inclusive and responsive institutions are critical to building and sustaining peace. During the electronic consultation, the Commission also stressed the importance of institutionalizing partnerships between the PBC and regional and sub-regional organizations, which often constitute key entry points for engaging with local, national, and regional actors for peace.

In a letter dated 2 July 2020 addressed to the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/74/935–S/2020/645), the PBC undertook to promote a more balanced approach to supporting nationally owned institution-building efforts over the short, medium, and long term, through its advisory and bridging role and by leveraging its convening power to bring relevant actors on board. Just this morning, the experts of the Peacebuilding Commission were discussing how to carry forward this important commitment in 2021. The Commission has agreed to systematically share good practices in institution-building, and I am pleased to inform you that, with support from UNDP which is championing UN work in this area, the Commission will meet at the ambassadorial-level on 17 May to exchange experiences and learn about good practices in relevant country-specific situations with the potential to strengthen resilience against unexpected shocks and transform institutions from the bottom-up in a way that contributes to building and sustaining peace in society.

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the UN's financial instrument of first resort for peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the UN's disposal, also has a lot of good practices and lessons learned to offer as it continues to support countries to strengthen national and local institutions, including in security sector reform, the rule of law, transitional justice, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, political dialogue, democratic governance, state capacities and extension of state authority.

In its efforts to support institution building efforts, the Commission will continue to partner with international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank and the regional development banks, which have leveraged resources, expertise, and capacities to help build national and local institutions in various fields in conflict-affected countries. This has been identified as a priority for COVID-19 recovery in 96 recent UN socio-economic impact assessments, which in many cases were done jointly by the UN, the World Bank and IMF and aim to assist governments in navigating public policy amidst unprecedented complexity.

Another priority which will guide the Commission's future engagement in this area is the need to ensure that UN field presences are fully equipped with the necessary expertise to help build stronger institutions in a coherent manner. Where so mandated, peacekeeping and special political missions should be given the means to implement peacebuilding-related activities aimed at supporting the building of national and local institutions and capacities. Currently, four out of 12 peacekeeping operations include in their mandates components to support state institutions in the stabilization and the extension of state authority, and six out of 12 special

political missions include in their mandates support to state institutions in consolidating good governance relating to political and economic reforms, the coordination of international reconstruction and development assistance. The Commission is therefore committed to further widen its network of partners so as to ensure adequate support for building strong and inclusive institutions.
