

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

Five-year review of its functioning



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INTRODUCTION

In addition to the Human Rights Council (the Council), the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) will be reviewed this year, five years after it was established.¹ The General Assembly and the Security Council will carry out the review, which provides an opportunity to reflect on the PBC's achievements and challenges, enhance its relevance, and improve its performance.²

The PBC review negotiations are not likely to be highly political. The process is widely expected to be approached as a stock-taking exercise of a relatively new body. The PBC was established in 2005 and is still finding and refining its strategic niche and value-added role. However there is a risk that institutional issues, such as proposed changes in the membership of the PBC's Organisational Committee, could shift the dynamic.

What is the PBC?

Established in 2005 by concurrent resolutions of the General Assembly (*Resolution 60/180*) and the Security Council (*Resolution 1645*), the PBC promised to close the institutional and strategic gap in the UN system on peacebuilding in post-conflict countries. The PBC acts as a central coordination hub and a main forum for key actors (including governments, donors, international financial institutions, UN operational actors, and civil society) to come together in support of integrated and coherent approaches to peacebuilding. The PBC also plays a unique role in lining up resources from donor countries, international financial institutions, and regional bodies, and in drawing their attention to post-conflict countries' specific peacebuilding needs. As part of the UN peacebuilding architecture, the UN also established two other supportive, complementary bodies, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in the UN Secretariat, and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

The Commission's Organisational Committee is comprised of 31 States. In addition to the Organisational Committee, the PBC meets in country-specific committees and has also set up a Working Group on Lessons Learned to distill lessons from post-conflict engagements. So far, the PBC has engaged with Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, where it has set up strategic frameworks for peacebuilding as well as monitoring mechanisms. It looks set to add Liberia to its agenda, following a request from the country that is supported by the Security Council.

¹ The PBC was established as one of the outcomes of the 2005 Millennium Summit. See General Assembly *Resolution 60/1*. The five-year review was decided in two simultaneous resolutions by the Security Council and the General Assembly that set out the mandate and functions of the PBC. For more information on the PBC see <http://bit.ly/KjP6H> and ISHR's guide to the PBC at, <http://bit.ly/aGph1W>. For relevant background documents and resolutions, see <http://bit.ly/cXkCaX>.

² For more information on the review and to access relevant documents see <http://bit.ly/aiffy5>.

REVIEW PROCESS AND KEY ISSUES

In December 2009, the President of the General Assembly appointed three co-facilitators from Ireland, Mexico, and South Africa to undertake consultations on the review. At the time of writing, the co-facilitators have held three open meetings (17 February, 10 May, and 7 July).³ At the second meeting, States based their comments on six clusters of issues identified by the co-facilitators to guide the discussion.⁴ The key issues were identified through consultations with various stakeholders:

- 1) **Evaluating the PBC's place within the overall UN architecture.** This includes re-evaluating the PBC's relationship with the Security Council (including its potential advisory role in the drafting of peacekeeping mandates), General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and assessing the extent to which peacebuilding is prioritised within the Secretariat and across the UN system.
- 2) **Improving the relationship between peacekeeping and peacebuilding,** including how to create smoother transitions between these processes.
- 3) **Mobilising resources and ensuring mutual accountability.** This includes assessing how the PBC can help ensure that governments and the international community abide by their mutual commitments. Another related issue is evaluating how the PBC can address the developmental challenges that characterise post-conflict societies.
- 4) **Overcoming challenges and improving results in the field.** This includes ensuring that administrative burdens, as a result of becoming a country on the PBC agenda, do not overwhelm new and fragile national structures or duplicate existing strategies, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). It also means ensuring that New York-based processes bring added value to developments on the ground.
- 5) **Improving regional approaches to peacebuilding,** including fostering relevant partnerships and developing perspectives that reflect the complexity of conflict situations.
- 6) **Scaling up the PBC,** such as analysing whether the PBC is equipped to take on further specific situations and include countries with larger population size.

The most recent paper by the facilitators on 'some emerging recommendations'⁵ was circulated before the third and final meeting. States were asked to comment on the following topics: the functioning of the PBC; its preventive dimension; the wider peacebuilding architecture; and the allocation of funding for the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

3 Analytical reports on General Assembly's three open ended consultative meetings with detailed overviews of States' positions are available at www.betterpeace.org. Together for a Better Peace is a joint World Federalist Movement and Institute for Global Policy project on the Peacebuilding Commission.

4 Review of Peacebuilding Architecture Emerging Issues, available at <http://bit.ly/boa7FB>.

5 Some Emerging Recommendations, available at <http://bit.ly/9R0lr9>.

NGO PARTICIPATION

NGOs have participated in informal meetings,⁶ monitored the review proceedings, and contributed policy papers to the review. However NGOs have not enjoyed any formal avenues for consultation during the process to date.

The review will not revisit the 2007 Guidelines for NGO Participation,⁷ which provide for the involvement of civil society and NGOs in the PBC's formal and informal meetings. Although some misgivings were expressed about the guidelines at their adoption, they have worked relatively well in practice.⁸ Many NGOs have advocated for a holistic approach by the PBC to engagement with civil society.⁹ This includes the PBC enhancing civil society's capacity building, and informing civil society actors about its work so they can effectively provide their important and constructive contributions.¹⁰

What is the Peacebuilding Fund?

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is a multi-donor trust fund funded by voluntary contributions. It aims to address immediate challenges to peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict, and catalyse sustained support and engagement of bilateral and multilateral donors. Countries that are not on the PBC agenda may also receive funding, following a declaration of eligibility by the Secretary-General. Among other activities, the PBF supports dialogue processes, capacity-building, and employment generation. The PBSO is responsible for the overall management of the PBF; the UN Development Programme (UNDP) administers the Fund. All proposals for funding from the PBF must be submitted through the office of the Senior UN Representative in-country, and all PBF funding is disbursed to recipient UN organisations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). NGOs cannot access the PBF directly, however they may implement projects through partnership arrangements with eligible UN agencies and organisations. In addition to an advisory board at the international level, the PBF also has a national steering committee for each country, where civil society has a place.

6 For example, the co-facilitators have held and participated in many informal meetings, including in New York, Burundi, and Geneva and have met with various stakeholders, including civil society actors.

7 PBC/1/OC/12.

8 NGOs, including human rights defenders, have contributed to the development of priorities, the integrated peace-building strategies, and the monitoring process at the country level. However, genuine engagement by civil society with the PBC has been inconsistent across different countries for various reasons.

9 For example, some NGOs are focused on ensuring that the PBC engages civil society at the beginning of PBC engagement and places greater emphasis on peacebuilding as a 'process' of restoring the social compact.

10 The Peacebuilding Commission Five Year Review: The Civil Society Perspective, June 2010. This joint policy paper (developed by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the Institute for Global Policy) outlines the main conclusions and reflections resulting from GPPAC's consultations with civil society organisations in Burundi and Sierra Leone, and meetings with NGOs in New York on the review of the PBC in spring 2010. Available at <http://bit.ly/caQIUz.0>

PEACEBUILDING FUND

National NGOs often focus on the PBF when seeking international peacebuilding support, rather than the PBC. It seems that many civil society actors have yet to fully understand and recognise the role of the PBC.

The PBC review is unlikely to impact on the operational aspects of the PBF, since the PBSO recently revised the Fund's terms of reference.¹¹ The main issue at stake in the review is the relationship between the PBF and the PBC.

Currently the PBC exercises very little oversight of the PBF, and some States¹² want the PBC to have a greater supervisory role, including in the PBF's priority setting and resource allocation. However others, mainly States that are donor countries, prefer to keep the political role to a minimum.

LOOKING FORWARD

The co-facilitators submitted their report on the review of the PBC to the President of the General Assembly on 19 July 2010.¹³ They concluded that the PBC is 'now at a crossroads', and rather than allowing it to settle into the 'limited role' it has had to date, States are 'strongly' in favour of revamping the PBC and re-affirming that peacebuilding is at the very heart of the UN's work.¹⁴

While States might agree on the kind of PBC they would like to see emerge, they are likely to hold a range of views about what actions need to be taken and by whom to achieve such an entity. We can therefore expect lively debates in both the General Assembly and Security Council about the way forward, but the timing of these debates is unclear at this stage. ■

Desired outcomes

Following their review of the PBC, the co-facilitators outlined the changes they would like to see emerge:

A more relevant PBC, with genuine national ownership ensured through capacity-building and greater civil society involvement; simplification of procedures; more effective resource mobilisation; deeper coordination with the international financial institutions; and a stronger regional dimension.

A more flexible PBC, with a possibility of multi-tiered engagement.

A better performing PBC, with an Organisational Committee that has improved status and focus; Country-Specific Configurations that are better resourced, more innovative, and have a stronger field identity.

A more empowered PBC, with a considerably strengthened relationship with the Security Council as well as with the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

A better supported PBC, with a strongly performing PBSO that carries greater weight within the Secretariat; and a PBF that is fully attuned to the purposes for which it was created.

A more ambitious PBC, with a more diverse range of countries on its agenda.

A better understood PBC, with an effective communications strategy that spells out what it has to offer and creates a more positive branding.

11 The main changes for the terms of reference were a broadening of the scope of the PBF to include 'efforts to revitalise the economy and generate immediate peace dividends to the population at large' and a restructuring of the PBF's funding facilities.

12 Non-Aligned Movement, African Group.

13 The report is available at <http://bit.ly/9uQ2hk>

14 Executive summary of the report of the review of the PBC, available at <http://bit.ly/9JoxaK>