

The Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council: From Cynicism to Synergy?



The PBC Chair Ambassador Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea) presided over a joint meeting this past June of the PBC and ECOSOC on the Sahel, one of the new regional and country situations on which the PBC has become involved during the last year. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed is on the left, and Ambassador Frederick Mushiwa Makamure Shava (Zimbabwe), President of ECOSOC, is on the right. (UN Photo/Kim Haughton)

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Security Council Report's sixth report on the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) looks at developments in the PBC and its relationship with the Security Council since our last report published in April 2013. It provides an overview of the recent activity of the PBC and evolution of its work. This includes the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review and initiatives since then to advance proposals regarding the PBC in the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions adopted on the review. The report also considers challenges in fulfilling the objectives of the PBC while setting out options to

strengthen the PBC, many of which are currently being developed among member states and by the Secretariat. There have been internal improvements in the work of the PBC and signs of greater openness towards it from the Security Council. The PBC has expanded the country situations it considers, and invigorated the role of its Organizational Committee. The Council is looking to the PBC to support Liberia's transition. The question remains whether such developments will translate into a greater perceived value for the Council and clearer benefits for countries that the PBC seeks to support. •

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For much of its existence, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)—which was created as an advisory body to the Council and the General Assembly—has been looked at cynically by some members of the Security Council, as not providing much added value to the Council’s work. Council members, but also the UN general membership and many among the staff in the UN Secretariat, have viewed the PBC as something of a disappointment. They have questioned its ability to advise about conflict-affected situations and have found its meetings redundant, duplicating discussion and information provided by the Secretariat during Council sessions. The PBC’s supporters, in turn, have criticised the Council for not being receptive to working with the PBC, thus limiting its ability over the years to demonstrate its value. Tensions have existed since the PBC’s creation in 2005, which occurred as Security Council reform stalled, with the P5 seeing the PBC as a forum created by member states to discuss peace and security issues, encroaching on the prerogatives of the Security Council.

Reviews in 2010 and 2015 of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture—comprising the PBC, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)—found that the PBC had not fulfilled the expectations envisioned when it was created to fill what then Secretary-General Kofi Annan called a “gaping hole” at the UN in its support to post-conflict countries.

Since the 2015 review, however, there has been new momentum towards strengthening the PBC and improving its relationship with the Council. The review culminated with the adoption in April 2016 by the Security Council and the General Assembly of substantively identical resolutions. To the surprise of many at the UN, the resolutions incorporated most of the ideas of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE), which had prepared a report as part of the review process. The eight-page resolutions (S/RES/2282 and A/RES/70/262), the UN’s most comprehensive on peacebuilding, expanded the understanding of peacebuilding as activities to be undertaken not only in post-conflict situations but also in order to prevent conflict in the first place, as well as during peacemaking and peacekeeping. The same sort of interventions often required in countries after armed conflict—rebuilding government institutions, promoting reconciliation between different communities, restarting economic development—are similar to the challenges many countries face

before they fall into conflict: institutions are often already weak, groups of people are marginalised, and economic opportunities are limited. This broader notion of peacebuilding was reflected in the definition of “sustaining peace” in the two resolutions, which has since become central to the UN reform agenda of Secretary-General António Guterres.

Changes in the PBC in recent years have included expanding the country situations it considers beyond the six countries that made up its agenda over the first decade of its existence, while increasing its focus on the regional dimensions of peacebuilding and enhancing cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations. According to diplomats, PBC meetings have become more interesting and substantive compared to just a few years ago. Among the P5, there have also been signs of increasing interest in and openness to the PBC’s supporting the Council’s work.

Moreover, under the Secretary-General’s proposed reform of the peace and security pillar of the Secretariat, the PBSO would be “bolstered” and assume a stronger cross-pillar bridging role in the future as part of a new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The PBC seems poised to see its role enhanced as part of these reforms, which seek to increase UN attention to conflict prevention and “sustaining peace” by addressing the fragmentation of the UN departments, agencies, and intergovernmental bodies.

The reason for creating the PBC made great sense conceptually: to ensure sustained attention to post-conflict countries—which would often wane following the withdrawal of a peacekeeping operation or reaching benchmarks such as the holding of elections—and prevent their relapse into conflict. Likewise, the concept of “sustaining peace” and the PBC’s potential role as outlined by the AGE are generally viewed as well considered. However, these ideas and the envisioned role for the PBC have not been easy to apply in practice, for both practical and political reasons. While there is new momentum that has not existed for some time to enhance the PBC, the challenge remains to translate this energy and vision into a more effective UN body.

This is Security Council Report’s sixth report on the PBC and the first following the 2015 review. This report will look at developments in the PBC and its relationship with the Security Council since our last report published in April 2013. It covers not only the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review but

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also initiatives to advance key ideas regarding the PBC in the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The report also seeks to consider challenges in fulfilling the objectives of the PBC while setting out ideas, many of which are currently being developed among member states and by the Secretariat, to enhance the PBC's contribution to the Security Council and make a more meaningful impact on the countries it considers.

The following are some of the main areas of promise for the PBC to improve its relationship with the Security Council and support to conflict-affected or fragile countries:

- The PBC's convening role and ability to bring together diverse actors, including member states, host governments, the UN system, international financial institutions, regional organisations, and civil society, is probably the PBC's greatest strength and advantage compared to the Security Council. It has the potential to better package the views of these actors for consideration by the Security Council. Its convening role is also a strength that provides the PBC the opportunity to play the bridging function, as envisioned by the AGE, to bring together the UN's main intergovernmental organs and contribute to addressing the fragmentation of the UN system, which has been identified as having hampered UN peacebuilding.
- To carry out its role of advising the Council, the PBC should fulfil its intention to ensure that its activities, whether through the Organizational Committee or existing country-specific configurations, are aligned with the Security Council's calendar and relevant meetings. This would entail the PBC's using its convening role to organise meetings with relevant actors during the months preceding Council sessions to gather diverse perspectives and develop its recommendations. It would also be important that, to the extent possible, country visits by PBC representatives occur prior to Council meetings on that situation.
- The type of advice and context that the PBC can focus on providing to the Council includes socio-economic and longer-term development issues, as well as regional dimensions that may impact countries' stability.
- The PBC has the potential to play a particularly important role during and following peace operation transitions, especially in the transition from a peace operation to a UN country team in a non-mission setting.
- Related to this, the PBC continues to have an important role in sustaining attention to situations that otherwise get overlooked because of multiple parallel crises or do not necessarily require Council attention.
- The PBC's convening ability and advisory role does not only entail organising meetings or providing the Council with information. The engagement of PBC members in more informal activities geared towards supporting countries' stability, such as connecting countries with partners that can fill needs, is another way to fulfill the advisory function that can complement the Council's work. This includes supporting countries not on the Council's agenda, potentially preventing them from becoming situations before the Council.
- Advocating for and raising awareness of countries' needs, whether in meetings or informally, is a way that the PBC may generate resources for peacebuilding.
- Informal engagement with Council penholders and its members in general remains a useful means for the PBC to support the Security Council's consideration of issues. This may include organising informal interactive dialogues on country situations ahead of relevant Council meetings, in particular before mission mandate renewals.

Background on the PBC

The PBC, along with the PBF and PBSO, was established on 20 December 2005 through Security Council resolution 1645 and General Assembly resolution A/60/180. The PBC was created as an intergovernmental advisory body to the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to maintain international attention to post-conflict countries and prevent their relapse into conflict, an all-too-frequent problem for post-conflict states. The PBC's founding resolutions mandated the PBC to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose strategies for post-conflict recovery; focus attention on post-conflict recovery efforts; and assist in coordinating the interventions of UN and non-UN actors in countries emerging from armed conflict.

The original proposal to establish the PBC by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges

and Change in its December 2004 report reflected the wider understanding of peacebuilding now recommended by the recent peacebuilding architecture review, suggesting that the PBC support countries both at risk of descending into or emerging from conflict. However, in view of sensitivities of member states to giving such a body a prevention mandate, when Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted his proposals to establish the UN's peacebuilding architecture in his March 2005 report "In Larger Freedom", he focused the PBC on supporting post-conflict countries. Nevertheless, Annan noted that "it would be valuable if Member States could at any stage make use of the Peacebuilding Commission's advice and could request assistance from a standing fund for peacebuilding to build their domestic institutions for reducing conflict".

The PBC comprises 31 member states, which sit on its Organizational Committee.

They include seven Security Council members (the P5 plus two non-permanent members); seven member states from each of the General Assembly and ECOSOC; and five member states each from leading troop-contributing countries and UN financial contributors. PBC members serve for renewable two-year terms. The Chair of the PBC is elected for a one-year term.

The founding resolutions set out that the PBC agenda would be based on requests for advice from the Council, the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Secretariat, or a member state at risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict. Today, four countries on the PBC agenda are also on the agenda of the Security Council: Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Guinea-Bissau, and Liberia. The PBC's fifth agenda situation is Sierra Leone, which came off the Council's active agenda after the departure in March

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2014 of the UN's last political mission to the country—the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). These situations were all referred to the PBC by the Security Council. Guinea, which was on the PBC agenda until earlier in 2017, was the one situation placed on the agenda by the request of its government, made in 2011.

These country situations have been considered over the years through the PBC's country-specific configurations (CSCs), which are each chaired by a different permanent representative of a UN member state. CSC memberships are broader than that of the PBC's Organizational Committee, being composed of interested member states and other relevant partners of the concerned country, such as, neighbouring states and major donors, including the international financial institutions (IFIs).

The PBC has often been viewed cynically by the Security Council, particularly its P5 members. But scepticism and a lack of interest in its work have featured more broadly among the attitudes of diplomats of other member states and parts of the Secretariat, who find its meetings too theoretical or redundant regarding issues discussed in the Security Council. A common critique from the P5 has been that the PBC has added little value to the Council's work. Challenges for the PBC include providing information that can appear relevant compared to that presented by a UN mission, when chairs of PBC country configurations are based in New York. The PBC is supported by the PBSO, which totals approximately 35 staff. The PBSO's analytical capability regarding country situations largely relies on the Department of Political Affairs

(DPA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which over the years have not always been very supportive.

While Council members, and the P5 in particular, have questioned the PBC's usefulness, proponents of the PBC have found the Council unreceptive to working with the PBC, thus limiting its ability over the years to demonstrate its value. Power relations have seemingly limited this relationship. In the eyes of many PBC members, the P5 do not like taking advice from anyone. Meanwhile, the P5 have perceived PBC members as seeking to intervene in the peace and security prerogatives of the Council. The PBC's creation came as progress in Security Council reform stalled, so for some member states seeking permanent membership, the PBC could provide some opportunity to influence issues of peace and security.

Developments in the PBC in 2013-2014

For years, a recurring contentious point in the PBC-Council relationship has been whether the CSC chairs should be able to participate in the Security Council's consultations. This is where, in principle, more frank and interactive discussion takes place compared to the formal interventions in the Council's public chamber. Admission to the consultations room has almost always been restricted to the Council's 15 members and Secretariat officials. Some CSC chairs, as well as several Council members, have argued that being able to join consultations would be a way that they could contribute to and advise the Council, more effectively than by reading a statement at the public session. But their arguments, rebuffed by some of the P5, have been to no avail.

Given this resistance, some Council and PBC members in recent years began focusing on other ways to improve interactions. In June 2013, Rwanda, at the time an elected Council member and a former chair of the PBC, started coordinating "stock-taking" sessions that bring together, two to three times a year, Council members that are members of the PBC, CSC chairs and agenda country representatives to examine PBC-Council relations and identify opportunities and practices to strengthen the PBC advisory role. This format continues today, with Malaysia replacing Rwanda as coordinator in 2015, followed by Egypt, which has served as coordinator since 2016.

Emerging in part from the initial stock-taking sessions in 2013 and 2014, efforts were made to increase cooperation at informal levels. CSC chairs of the Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi configurations held briefings with Council experts ahead of Council meetings and negotiations of mandate renewals on UN missions or, in the case of the Burundi configuration, before and after the chair's country visits. There were another series of informal briefings of Council experts by CSC chairs and PBC chair Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) to discuss the terms of reference in advance of the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review. While Council experts are the diplomats who negotiate Council products and prepare statements, such meetings, according to one diplomat, do not fully substitute for participating in consultations since it still deprives Council ambassadors of the opportunity to hear from the CSC chairs. These informal briefings have never become a regular practice. However, a number of CSC chairs have developed regular informal consultations with Council penholders.

Since 2012, a mainstay of the PBC-Council relationship has been the Council's yearly informal interactive dialogue with the PBC and CSC chairs, as well as agenda country representatives, which follows the presentation to the Council of the PBC annual report. The annual informal interactive dialogue,

however, has often not generated much interest among Council members, represented at times by more junior diplomats, and agenda country representatives have themselves sometimes not attended. The 2017 informal interactive dialogue in June on the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin region marked the first time that the session centred around specific countries and regions, whereas past discussions had been only on thematic issues and the Council-PBC relationship.

In 2014, the PBC also began holding an annual session in June around the observance of Peacebuilding Day on 23 June. The idea stemmed from one of the observations of the 2010 peacebuilding architecture review that found that the PBC suffered from a lack of awareness in capitals. The annual session was thus envisioned as an event that could bring to New York high-level officials to discuss policy issues related to peacebuilding.

During 2014, the PBC under the chairmanship of Ambassador Patriota began placing greater focus on regional approaches to peacebuilding. This was also when the PBC started exhibiting signs of increasing the relevance of the Organizational Committee. It seems this was prompted in large part by the Ebola crisis, which by the summer of 2014 was rapidly spreading through Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, all three countries on the agenda of the PBC. On 6 August 2014, the chairs of

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the Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations—Ambassadors Sylvie Lucas (Luxembourg), Mårten Grunditz (Sweden), and Guillermo Rishchynski (Canada), respectively—issued a joint letter to PBC members highlighting the need for sustained international support to respond to the Ebola epidemic. This was followed by a rare joint meeting of the three configurations on 18 August, which included a briefing from Mano River Union Secretary-General Hadja Saran Daraba Kaba. Daraba Kaba highlighted the importance of inter-country actions as the countries' cross-border regions accounted for more than 70 percent of Ebola cases. A subsequent PBC session on the crisis was held on 8 September.

The PBC was ahead of the Security Council and the UN leadership in focusing attention on the Ebola crisis. On 18 September, the Council held an emergency open debate on Ebola and adopted resolution 2177 on the epidemic, and the General Assembly followed the next day by establishing the UN Mission

for Emergency Ebola Response (UNMEER). The Council's consideration of the crisis, however, seems to have been carried out in relative isolation from PBC efforts. Council attention appeared prompted more by violence that had broken out in Monrovia, revealing the epidemic's destabilising potential, and by concerns about the health of peacekeepers in Liberia. Council resolution 2177 contains only preambular recognition of the role of the PBC "in supporting the national, regional and international efforts to respond to the Ebola outbreak", with no mention of its activities during the preceding weeks.

The PBC would remain engaged on the epidemic. In November, Patriota requested the Secretary-General to conduct an assessment on the crisis' impact on peacebuilding efforts, and over the next two years, the PBC would focus on promoting the three countries' post-Ebola recovery needs.

In November 2014, the PBC took steps to develop institutional collaboration with

regional and subregional organisations. From 24 to 26 November, Patriota led a delegation comprising the chairs of the Burundi and CAR configurations to Cairo and Addis Ababa—a rare trip abroad by the PBC chair. (The only previous comparable activity was a 2011 high-level meeting with the African Development Bank in Kigali on Rwanda's post-conflict peacebuilding experience, organised by Rwanda during its PBC chairmanship.) In Cairo, a workshop was organised with, inter alia, representatives of the AU and African subregional organisations on the role of regional actors in supporting political processes and institution-building, as well as the potential for the PBC to enhance its engagement with and support for regional initiatives. Then, in Addis, the delegation held a policy dialogue with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), in addition to meetings with the AU Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank.

The Ten-Year Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

It was also during Patriota's chairmanship that the PBC undertook preparations for the 2015 UN peacebuilding architecture review (PBAR). The Council and General Assembly resolutions on the first five-year review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture in 2010 (S/RES/1947; A/RES/65/7) had called for a further comprehensive review in 2015.

The review in 2010, led by the ambassadors of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa, included proposals (some of which were not so different from those that would be generated during the 2015 review) to improve PBC-Council interaction, the PBC's links to the field and the flexibility of its working methods. However, many of the recommendations put forward in their final report had either gone unimplemented or had not achieved their objective of reinvigorating the peacebuilding architecture.

In the lead-up to the ten-year review, the PBC undertook a lengthy consultative process with member states that began in May 2014 to develop terms of reference. This contrasted with the 2010 review, ahead of which there had been no such consultation and which had generated little interest among the UN membership when it was completed.

Also significant in the lead-up to the 2015

review were recent relapses into conflict in the CAR and South Sudan, along with a broader rising trend in violent conflict. This created greater interest among member states in considering ways to strengthen UN peacebuilding. Significantly, and in further contrast with 2010, the terms of reference for the 2015 review, set out in a joint letter from the presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly to the Secretary-General dated 15 December 2014, enabled the ten-year review to look beyond the UN peacebuilding architecture—the PBC, PBF and PBSO—to consider how peacebuilding was dealt with by the UN system more broadly; they called for "recommendations on the functioning, resources, and modes of engagement of the peacebuilding architecture and on its links with the United Nations system that engages with it".

The Advisory Group of Experts Report

A seven-person independent panel called the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE), chaired by former Permanent Representative of Guatemala Gert Rosenthal, carried out the first phase of the 2015 review. On 29 June 2015, the AGE submitted a final report to member states, titled "The Challenges of Sustaining

Peace" (S/2015/490).

One of its key conclusions was the need for a broader understanding of peacebuilding. The AGE contended that peacebuilding takes place not only in post-conflict situations—as had become the common understanding—but also to prevent conflict in the first place, during peacemaking and in peacekeeping. Occurring across the conflict cycle, peacebuilding was thus a responsibility of the entire UN system, not just of its peacebuilding architecture. The narrower understanding and a lack of commitment to peacebuilding had been manifested in the underfunding of peacebuilding activities and neglect of conflict prevention. Referring to this broader understanding, the AGE proposed replacing the term "peacebuilding" with "sustaining peace".

The report further identified shortcomings in peacebuilding efforts as resulting from the fragmentation of the UN system among the UN's intergovernmental organs, the Secretariat, and the UN's agencies, funds and programmes. The AGE stressed the need to better integrate the UN's peace and security, human rights, and development pillars to promote greater coherence of efforts and analysis for sustaining peace and peacebuilding.

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The AGE held that the PBC was well positioned to address this fragmentation. It should continue its functions of advocacy, support for marshalling resources, assisting in improving coordination within and outside the UN, and formulating policy recommendations. But the AGE said that the PBC should focus more on being an advisory “bridge” by taking advantage of its diverse membership and convening power to get the Security Council, ECOSOC and General Assembly to work together better. Doing this would require PBC members to see themselves as representing and being accountable to the intergovernmental organ that elected or designated them.

According to the AGE, a stronger PBC “will particularly depend on a deepened commitment from the main intergovernmental peacebuilding actor, the Security Council”. The report recommended that the Council draw on the PBC’s advice regarding peacebuilding aspects of peace operations’ mandates, and that an overstretched Council consider passing situations where peace consolidation has progressed sufficiently to the PBC.

In considering the PBC’s shortcomings, the AGE said that it should diversify its working methods and the country situations that it considers. It recommended that the PBC move away from its reliance on the CSCs, where most of its work and activities have taken place, and invigorate the primacy of the Organizational Committee. The AGE highlighted that the PBC appeared to lack relevance to observers, demonstrated in part by the fact that its six-country agenda reflected only a small proportion of peacebuilding contexts. By contrast, the PBF had disbursed money to 32 countries over the past ten years. The AGE further recommended enhancing the PBC’s cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations and international financial institutions.

Regarding what the AGE identified as significant underfunding for peacebuilding activities, it proposed that one percent of the value of total UN budgets for peace operations or \$100 million (whichever was greater) be provided annually to the PBF from assessed contributions. It also recommended using assessed

contributions for programmatic dimensions of peace operations’ mandates, such as rule of law and security sector reform, which currently rely on voluntary contributions.

The report made a number of other observations. Peacebuilding required more attention to tackling the root causes of conflict and should be recognised as an inherently political process. It should be based on “inclusive” national ownership, since national ownership was not enough if it was based on just the views of domestic elites or authoritarian governments. While noting that a peace operation’s departure from a country often leads to a steep drop-off in financing to continue peacebuilding activities, the AGE also pointed out that this is frequently accompanied by an abrupt reduction in UN political capacities. It thus highlighted the need for UN resident coordinators, who lead the UN country teams, to have greater political acumen and to be able to play a strategic political role, which is still required after the departure of a UN mission.

The Peacebuilding Fund

The PBF has been considered by most observers as the most successful of the three entities in the UN’s peacebuilding architecture. It was set up to fund projects that target peacebuilding needs of conflict-affected countries which tend not to receive traditional donor support, since many types of peacebuilding activities are viewed as risky. The PBSO manages the PBF, which has two mechanisms: an Immediate Response Facility used to fill urgent peacebuilding needs and a Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility, which provides medium-term financing to countries and which over the lifespan of PBF has made up the majority of its funding. Decisions on projects that the PBF supports are kept independent of the PBC. Projects are approved by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support on behalf of the Secretary-General based on a

review involving the UN’s Peacebuilding Contact Group (comprised of UN agencies, funds, programmes and the Secretariat).

Member states generally praise the PBF, viewing it as an important, flexible and speedy source of funding. The AGE confirmed these observations, though it noted that the catalytic role envisioned for it when it was created—to provide initial funds that then attract resources from other sources—had largely not materialised. Early on, PBC agenda countries made up the majority of the beneficiaries of its financing. Over the last five years, this share has progressively fallen to only 10 percent in 2016 as the number of countries benefitting from PBF support has expanded.

During the negotiations on the resolutions emerging from the 2015 review, member states that opposed using assessed contributions for

the PBF contended that the AGE recommendation would create an oversight role of the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee and thus weaken the PBF’s nimbleness and flexibility, which are among its strengths. Their opposition to the proposal makes it unlikely that member states will agree to options in the Secretary-General’s forthcoming implementation report on the peacebuilding architecture review for applying assessed contributions to peacebuilding. In recent years, the UN has set the goal for annual PBF investments of at least \$100 million. A September 2016 pledging conference that aimed to raise \$300 million for the three-year period 2017-2019 was seen as disappointing, raising only \$152 million. Still, as part of his reform proposals, the Secretary-General is seeking a “quantum” increase in the capacity of the PBF.

The preparation of the AGE report coincided with two other major reviews—the review of peace operations and the review of the implementation of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. During these processes, the panels of the three reviews regularly consulted with each other and arrived at a number of convergent findings. For example, the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) said

that central to sustaining peace and avoiding relapses into conflict is the need to maintain and strengthen political momentum, to address the underlying causes of the conflict, to deepen and broaden peace processes, and to advance reconciliation. According to the HIPPO, “the challenge for peace operations is to help sustain peace while a long-term, often generational effort to strengthen state institutions gets under way”. Among its

recommendations, the HIPPO said that mission budgets should be provided with programmatic resources necessary for mandated tasks to support the sustaining of peace.

General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions

The submission of the AGE report triggered an intergovernmental process for member states to consider the report’s analysis and

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recommendations. This process, which was co-chaired by Australia on behalf of the General Assembly, and Angola, from the Security Council, culminated in April 2016 with the adoption of substantively identical resolutions: Security Council resolution 2282 and General Assembly resolution 70/262. To the surprise of many at the UN, these incorporated many of the findings of the AGE, and the eight-page resolutions were the UN's most comprehensive on peacebuilding. By comparison, the follow-up Council and General Assembly resolutions to the 2010 review had little content and each totalled six paragraphs, or about a single page in length.

A 23 February 2016 open debate on the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture, organised by Venezuela during its Council presidency, was credited in part for facilitating what would ultimately be a challenging negotiation on the resolutions. The session revealed wide and diverse member state support for the AGE report, which seemed to reduce some members' reluctance to accept the AGE's proposed broader notion of peacebuilding. The debate represented another contrast from 2010, when the Security Council never formally discussed the report of the first PBC review.

Taking on board the AGE's argument regarding the need to view peacebuilding more broadly, the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions included a definition of sustaining peace, described as "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society...which encompasses activities aimed

at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict". The definition captured other critical aspects for sustaining peace as outlined by the AGE: the importance of addressing root causes, promoting inclusivity by accounting for the needs of all segments of society, and basing interventions on all three pillars of the UN's work in security, human rights and development.

The resolutions further reaffirmed the PBC's mandate: to sustain international attention to conflict-affected countries; to promote a strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding; to serve an advisory "bridging role" among the principal UN organs and entities; and to provide a forum for convening all relevant actors. The Council expressed its intention to regularly request and draw upon the PBC's "specific, strategic and targeted advice" in the formation, review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Specifying that the advice be "specific, strategic and targeted" was an attempt by the P5 to address their complaints about the PBC's added value. Moreover, the resolutions encouraged the PBC to diversify its working methods in support of sustaining peace, including to enable consideration of more country situations, upon the request of the country concerned; regional and cross-cutting issues; and greater synergies with the PBF.

On the financing gap for peacebuilding activities, the resolutions acknowledged "the need for UN peacebuilding efforts to have adequate, predictable and sustained financing".

The General Assembly resolution included a decision, which the Council version took note of, to invite the Secretary-General to provide during its 72nd session, which began in September 2017, a report on the implementation of the resolution that should contain options for funding peacebuilding through assessed and voluntary contributions. Having such a reference to assessed contributions proved contentious during negotiations on the text as large financial contributors made clear their opposition to accepting the AGE's proposals regarding assessed contributions.

The resolutions also made strong appeals for UN reforms, calling for strengthening operational and policy coherence within the UN system; improving internal UN leadership, capability and accountability at headquarters and in the field; and strengthening partnerships with international, regional and subregional organisations, international financial institutions, and civil society organisations.

Upon their adoption, the resolutions were hailed as landmark texts. Negotiations had been conducted among the full UN membership through the General Assembly. When an agreement was reached and the text was presented to Council members to consider the technical changes required to make it a Council resolution, some Council delegates who had not participated in the negotiations commented that there was language, for example, related to development, which if negotiated through the Council, was most unlikely to have been agreed.

Developments in the PBC since 2015

The review and resolutions sparked new momentum to strengthen the PBC, which some diplomats have described as a "window of opportunity" to show that the PBC can be more relevant. Notable changes in the PBC over the past two years include the revitalisation of the Organizational Committee, consideration of new country and regional situations beyond the PBC's established agenda, and growing cooperation with regional and subregional organisations.

PBC Activities in 2015 and 2016

During 2015, before completion of the review, the PBC, under the chairmanship of

Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden) had already begun to test ideas in the AGE report while building on the work of Ambassador Patriota. Skoog and his successor, Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya), both promoted Ebola recovery in 2015 and 2016, each undertaking visits to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. In 2015, the PBC also held a number of uncharacteristic meetings on non-agenda countries: on Burkina Faso regarding upcoming elections as part of the country's political transition, and on financing for peacebuilding in Papua New Guinea and Somalia. In 2016, the PBC continued such initiatives, meeting on financing for peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan

at a 10 October session.

During Kamau's chairmanship in 2016, the PBC placed further emphasis on looking at peacebuilding challenges through a regional perspective, focusing on West Africa. The PBC met in January on peacebuilding threats and challenges in the subregion, followed by a session in April on the subregional dimensions of peacebuilding in West Africa. The January meeting looked at regional challenges, including violent extremism and cross-border security, while the April session allowed discussion on potential support roles that the PBC could provide to countries such as Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, which had benefitted

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from PBF funding and which Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco had visited during a tour of the region in March.

This two-year period thus saw the PBC engaging with the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union, and the World Bank (especially in the context of post-Ebola recovery). It further increased its interaction with the UN's regional offices, in particular the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), but also with the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRC-CA) during its discussion on Kyrgyzstan.

In October, Kamau led a mission of the PBC's vice-chairs and Fernandez-Taranco to Addis Ababa to meet with the AU PSC. A PSC communiqué following a meeting with the PBC delegation called for greater collaboration and coordination between the two bodies, deciding, inter alia, to hold an annual meeting with the PBC and to undertake joint visits to conflict and post-conflict areas in Africa.

Working Methods Review

Following the encouragement in the PBAR resolutions for the PBC to review its provisional rules of procedure and adopt more flexible and efficient working methods, during the second half of 2016, Kenya and Switzerland produced a non-paper on the PBC's working methods and rules of procedure. This led to a number of recommendations that the PBC informally adopted, which were included in an annex to the PBC's tenth annual report (S/2017/76).

Some of these recommendations are based on practices that the PBC had begun developing over the previous two sessions: having a more active Organizational Committee and using it more as a platform to convene country-specific, regional and thematic discussions; adopting and publicising an annual work plan of the PBC that is updated over the course of the year; and keeping the

PBC better informed of the progress made by countries that are supported by the PBF (which has included more than two dozen countries that are not on the PBC's agenda). Other recommendations are more aspirational, such as PBC member states doing more to represent the UN organs that elect them and fulfil the PBC's bridging role to link the work of the Security Council, General Assembly and ECOSOC, and other relevant entities.

A practice that the PBC has begun that was also included among these recommendations is having the outgoing PBC chair serve as one of the two Vice-Chairs. The purpose is to create greater continuity and to address the challenge to the active leadership of the PBC created by the chair only serving a one-year term.

PBC Activities in 2017

The first 10 months of 2017 have seen further evolution of the PBC under the chairmanship of Ambassador Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea or ROK). Notably, this has included the PBC following up and supporting the work of the Security Council, in the context of The Gambia and the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, in addition to the Liberia CSC's increased role in supporting implementation of a peacebuilding plan that the Council requested for Liberia.

The Gambia

In December 2016 and January 2017, the Security Council became seized with The Gambia crisis. It held seven meetings on the situation, as well as discussing the crisis during its regularly scheduled session on UNOWAS. Resolution 2337, adopted on 19 January moments before ECOWAS troops reportedly began entering the country, endorsed the decisions of ECOWAS and the AU to recognise Adama Barrow as president. But after a 25 January meeting at which Council members were updated on the agreement that led long-standing president Yahya Jammeh to cede power, Council attention to

The Gambia, which is not on its formal agenda, seemed to come to a sudden halt.

The PBC became involved as The Gambia's UN permanent representative, Ambassador Mamadou Tangara, decided the body could be a way to sustain international attention and support for his country's new government. The PBC Chair, Ambassador Cho, undertook an initial visit to The Gambia in March, accompanied by Tangara and Fernandez-Taranco. The Organizational Committee then discussed the priorities of the new government and ways for the PBC to provide support during a 19 April meeting. This was followed up by a luncheon hosted by the ROK on 30 June during the PBC's annual session to discuss current programmes of support and continuing needs with The Gambia's Attorney General and Minister of Justice Abubacarr Tambadou and representatives of the World Bank, African Development Bank, and UN Development Programme. At time of writing, the PBC was planning a session most likely in December to raise awareness for a donor conference being organised on The Gambia.

UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel

Also earlier this year, the Council called for the PBC to support UNOWAS in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (the Sahel strategy) in a 20 January presidential statement on the activities of the regional office and developments in the subregion. The statement, adopted the day after the Council's much more widely noted resolution on the crisis in The Gambia, emphasised the "importance of the convening role" of the PBC, charging it with supporting UNOWAS "in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the UN system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners" to advance the implementation of the UN Sahel strategy. The request marked the Council's first call for PBC support on a new issue since it had requested the PBC's advice on Liberia in 2010.

The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel

The Council requested the Secretary-General to develop an integrated strategy for the Sahel region in resolution 2056 on Mali in 2012. The Council was concerned that problems that had led to the crisis in Mali were common across the region, and that efforts to defeat extremist groups in the country's north could simply push them into neighbouring countries of the Sahel. The Secretary-General

presented the UN Sahel strategy to the Council in June 2013, which the Council welcomed in a 16 July presidential statement.

In many ways the Sahel strategy was a precursor of a "sustaining peace" approach. The strategy identified the common structural root causes of instability in the region, i.e. poverty, underdevelopment and weak governance, especially in border regions. It then

sought to promote a coherent and regional approach among UN agencies operating in the region to tackle these problems, while also coordinating with non-UN actors.

According to a 2016 independent review, which was not published but was shared with Council members, the implementation of the Sahel strategy has so far been a "failure". Difficulties in implementing the strategy

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likely reveal lessons and challenges ahead for advancing the sustaining peace agenda. One of the difficulties has been getting UN agencies to overcome their traditional fragmentation and to work together, since they are not used to being coordinated nor to working regionally. At a structural level, the administrative set-up of the agencies, which, for example, organise their budgets at the country level, makes regional and joint programming a challenge.

Another shortcoming has been a

proliferation of Sahel strategies among inter-governmental organisations and governments—roughly 18 as of this writing. The independent review suggested the UN DPA and UNOWAS place renewed focus on coordinating these efforts. The PBC, through its bridging and convening role, could conceivably provide a forum to bring more coherence to the different interventions in the region. The challenges of implementing the strategy further highlight the importance of

national ownership in peacebuilding, as the Council-mandated strategy, developed by the UN in 2012 and 2013 has struggled to generate interest from countries of the region. During the Council's October 2017 mission to the Sahel to assess the progress of Sahel countries in setting-up a joint counter-terrorism force, members heard criticism that the UN Sahel strategy lacks focus on infrastructure and energy projects that are vital to the development of Sahel states.

Though the Sahel strategy, like The Gambia, has not been added to the PBC's formal agenda, in 2017, the PBC held meetings on the strategy on 6 March and during a 21 April Council-PBC stock-taking session. Ambassador Cho attended a 14 June meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform of Sahel Strategies in N'Djamena with Fernandez-Taranco, where he had the opportunity to meet with leaders of The Group of Five for the Sahel and UNOWAS head Mohamed Ibn Chambas to further explore ways the PBC could provide support. He then briefed on his visit during the Council-PBC 19 June informal interactive dialogue on the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, the latter of which Cho had also discussed during his meetings in N'Djamena. A joint PBC-ECOSOC meeting was held on 28 June to consider the development aspects of the Sahel and the UN strategy, which represented an attempt by the PBC to play its envisioned bridging role among the UN's intergovernmental organs.

The discussion of new country situations in the PBC also included a 7 June meeting on the Solomon Islands and its peacebuilding challenges ahead of the withdrawal of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)—an Australian-led operation deployed to the archipelagic country since 2003 following internal conflict that began in the late 1990s. The country's prime minister, Manasseh Sogavare, addressed the PBC, outlining some of the government's concerns and priorities over outstanding land tenure issues, corruption and climate change.

Changes in Working Methods

Among other changes in 2017, CSC chairs have started providing quarterly briefings to the Organizational Committee about each configuration's activities and upcoming work plans. The practice, which was another recommendation resulting from the 2016 working methods review, is meant to break down the

silos and fragmentation within the PBC itself.

The PBSO has also started regularly briefing members during PBC meetings on the activities of the PBF, to reduce the disconnect that has existed between the PBC and PBF and to follow up on the call in the resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture review for increased synergies. In addition, creating greater awareness among the membership of the PBC about the PBF's activities has been another way to engage the PBC on the broader array of countries that have peacebuilding needs. There are now plans to encourage countries that are declared eligible for PBF money to brief the PBC on their peacebuilding strategies. The first such session was held with Colombia on 13 November, and a similar meeting was held on Sri Lanka on 20 November. During CSC meetings, PBSO representatives are also more regularly briefing about PBF programmes in agenda countries.

Another new initiative in 2017 was the agreement reached in April among PBC members to create focal points on thematic aspects of peacebuilding. Belgium was designated the focal point on youth; Bangladesh and Canada, on gender; Russia, on national ownership; Indonesia and Norway, on financing for peacebuilding; and Japan, on institution-building with a focus on judicial reform, border control, and financial structures. The focal points are expected to ensure attention to these dimensions of peacebuilding in the PBC's consideration of different situations. The initiative was not without controversy. A number of members, including the P5, initially objected to the idea and remain sceptical that the focal points simply replicate the CSCs, which the PBC has been intending to move away from.

The way these focal points will function is still developing. The idea of creating focal points was also seen as a way to encourage PBC members to become more engaged during PBC meetings. Some focal points have organised side events. Japan has initiated several

informal meetings in its role as the focal point for institution-building; these included sessions on border management and extending state authority in the Sahel, and on criminal justice systems in Guinea and Nepal. Indonesia and Norway organised a PBC session to consider innovative financing for peacebuilding. Amidst long-standing criticism that the PBC often holds meetings without much impact, focal points could pursue less formal activities. In addition to ensuring consideration of their thematic issues during PBC meetings, they may attempt to engage bilaterally with different actors to explore opportunities to address relevant needs of a country and then bring these discussions back to the PBC when useful.

The creation of the focal points comes as the PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL), established in December 2006, has stopped meeting this year. To some extent, the focal points on thematic issues replace the WGLL, which had been a format to discuss thematic issues. The Guinea CSC also ended in 2017, which followed President Alpha Condé's General Assembly remarks in September 2016 that the recent peacebuilding architecture resolutions provided an opportunity to consider more flexible interaction for Guinea with the PBC. A subsequent PBC review conducted during the latter part of 2016 recommended terminating the CSC. Guinea sent a formal request in early July 2017 to end the CSC, though it has expressed interest in future engagement through the Organizational Committee.

During 2017, the PBC has sought to develop its partnerships with external actors. An agreement between the PBC and the World Bank to hold an annual dialogue was announced during the PBC's annual session in June. In early December, PBC Chair Cho and other members will visit the AU and the African Development Bank to further build on the work of Ambassador Kamau in 2016.

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Moving Away from Country-Specific Configurations

The AGE had recommended that the PBC diversify its working methods to give it the flexibility to consider a larger and more diverse array of countries and regions. It also recommended that the PBC maximise the work it conducts, including country-specific and region-specific discussions and engagement, through its Organizational Committee as opposed to the CSCs, which it noted had taken on “a life of their own” and “crowded out” activities of the overall Commission.

Since the review, there has been a concerted effort in the PBC to move away from the CSC format and to develop other options for country-specific meetings. The CSCs have been useful in some cases, which the AGE acknowledged, but their effectiveness has depended largely on the individual ambassadors chairing them, and the resources available to these ambassadors. Some configuration chairs over the years have been very active, but others less so. Unlike the PBC chair, who changes after a one-year term, CSC chairs remain in their roles indefinitely and for political reasons are difficult to

replace. With PBSO support being limited by its staffing, this dependency on the chair has been described as a built-in vulnerability.

Moreover, with the CSC chairs playing such a prominent leading role in the consideration of specific country situations, it has been argued that this has reduced the incentive for other PBC members to be more active, while from the perspective of some agenda countries this has limited their ability to engage with a wider array of PBC members. Moving away from this format and increasingly conducting the PBC’s work through the Organizational Committee is seen as a possible way to foster greater collective efforts. Getting away from CSCs and the strictures of a formal agenda is also seen as a way to get around another obstacle facing the PBC, the stigma which some countries associate with being on the PBC’s agenda. This has negative connotations from the perspective of many countries, in a similar way to being on the agenda of the Security Council, as it seems to indicate that a country has serious problems.

But without CSCs or a designated lead

country, the question that arises is how to ensure that the PBC remains engaged and meetings on new country situations do not simply become one-off discussions. So far, the PBC chair has been leading the PBC’s work on The Gambia and the Sahel strategy, as well as possible follow-up regarding the Solomon Islands and Guinea. But as more new situations come before it that require follow-through, it seems unlikely the chair would be able to sustain this role. The Secretary-General’s 2017 reform proposals, which would appear to heighten the role of the PBSO and the UN’s focus on peacebuilding, may enable the Secretariat to play a greater role in this regard. Another possibility is increasing the number of the PBC vice-chairs from two to four, in line with the four vice-chairs appointed to the committees of the General Assembly. How the PBC deals with the increasing country situations coming before it is still evolving. Depending on each situation and the seriousness of its needs, there are likely to be different forms in which the PBC exercises follow-up.

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As noted, the AGE wrote that a more effective PBC would particularly depend on a deeper commitment from the UN’s “main intergovernmental peacebuilding actor, the Security Council”. Despite the completion of the review and unfolding changes in the PBC, scepticism remains about whether the PBC can become a reliable resource to support the Council’s work. At the same time, there have been clear signs of increasing Council engagement with the PBC and openness on the part of P5 members.

A symbolic, though still meaningful, change following the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture was the Council changing the title of the agenda item under which it considers peacebuilding. The General Assembly created a new agenda item called “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace” in its version of the concurrent resolutions. In June 2016, the day before the PBC would present its annual report for the Security Council’s first meeting on peacebuilding since adopting resolution 2282, Council members similarly updated its

agenda title from “post-conflict peacebuilding” to “peacebuilding and sustaining peace”.

At a formal level, CSC chairs have continued to brief the Council during public sessions. Participation by PBC chairs at Council meetings has increased, reflecting the more active role of the chair and the Organizational Committee. In 2016, in addition to participating in specific Council meetings on peacebuilding, the PBC chair briefed the Council at the 28 March open debate on “Women, peace and security: the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa” and at a 24 May open debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations. The PBC chair, and other PBC representatives have also participated in a number of meetings of the Council’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa since 2015 when Angola was chairing the working group and also serving as co-chair of the intergovernmental process of the peacebuilding architecture review.

Burundi

When discussing positive experiences with the PBC, Council members frequently refer to the Burundi configuration. Members, including the P5, have often cited the importance of Ambassadors Paul Seger and Jürg Lauber of Switzerland—the former and current chairs, respectively, of the configuration—maintaining a channel of communication with the Burundian government when the UN’s relationship with the government soured in 2014 and 2015. More recently, the configuration’s focus on socio-economic dimensions has been seen by some members as a good approach to providing incentives to the government, which has been keen to see the resumption of aid that western countries suspended after President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to stand for a third term in 2015.

Liberia

Liberia stands out as another example of the Council’s increased engagement with the PBC since the peacebuilding architecture

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review. The country is widely perceived as a key test for the PBC since the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is downsizing and is expected to withdraw by the end of March 2018. In resolution 2333 (23 December 2016), which renewed UNMIL for a final time, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a “peacebuilding plan” for Liberia, emphasising “the important convening role of the Peacebuilding Commission in the process of developing this plan”. This was the first time the Council had sought such a plan for an upcoming transition ahead of the departure of a peacekeeping operation.

The idea for the plan, notably, came from the US, which with France and the UK have shown an increasing interest in the role that the PBC can play in supporting smoother transitions during the drawdown of peace operations. For the US, the emphasis on transitions fits well with its priority of reducing costs and deciding exit strategies for expensive, long-standing peacekeeping operations. During the General Assembly’s 24 January high-level dialogue on sustainable development and sustaining peace, the US showed what diplomats and Secretariat officials saw as a new level of openness towards the PBC, when US Deputy Permanent Representative Michele Sison spoke about “the major opportunity for the Peacebuilding Commission to show that it can help organize the UN’s efforts and mobilize international donors in support” of a sustaining peace approach in Liberia.

In April 2017, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a peacebuilding plan for Liberia, which the UN had prepared through consultations with various actors, including the government and Liberia’s political parties, in the context of forthcoming presidential and legislative elections in October. The plan is consistent with an approach of sustaining peace. It identifies the potential sources of renewed conflict and sets out a division of labour among the UN country team, UNOWAS, ECOWAS and the World Bank to support the government. On 24 July, the Council adopted a presidential statement welcoming the plan.

Council members have been positive about Sweden’s efforts as chair of the Liberia CSC, which is led by Ambassador Olof Skoog. Sweden has a long history of development cooperation with Liberia, one of the largest recipients of its official development assistance in Africa. Since the peacebuilding plan’s finalisation, Sweden has organised PBC meetings to discuss the findings of a

UN mapping exercise that revealed significant technical capacity gaps facing the UN country team if the plan is to be executed. The Council’s 24 July presidential statement encourages the international community to address the gaps identified in this mapping exercise. Skoog has further committed to advocacy efforts to raise the \$130 million required for the first two years of the peacebuilding plan and to have the CSC monitor the plan’s implementation.

The case of Liberia over the past year appears to demonstrate good cooperation between the PBC and the US as the Council penholder on Liberia. Following a visit to Liberia in October 2016 by Skoog to complement a UN strategic assessment mission, Sweden provided Council experts with a briefing on his trip, hosted at the US mission. Coordinating with the US, Sweden drafted the Council’s recent presidential statement on Liberia’s peacebuilding plan—a level of cooperation between penholder and CSC chair that is not common. This has certainly been facilitated by Sweden’s currently serving on the Council and thus is less likely to be replicated for CSC chairs or PBC members who are not simultaneously Council members. As the PBC moves away from its CSC formats and broadens the situations before it, there might be opportunities, however, for countries with dual PBC-Council memberships to champion different country situations within the Council.

Sierra Leone

The Council’s interest in seeing that the PBC remains engaged with Liberia stands in contrast to the Sierra Leone transition a few years ago. In 2013, when the Council renewed the mandate of UNIPSIL for a final time through resolution 2097, the Council requested the PBC “to review its engagement with a view to scaling down its role”. At the time, the UK, which was the penholder on Sierra Leone, had in mind that Sierra Leone might also come off the PBC’s agenda when the UN’s peacebuilding mission ended. A PBC assessment mission was conducted, and along with the Sierra Leone government’s preference to maintain PBC support, it was decided to maintain the CSC in a “lighter” form.

Since UNIPSIL’s departure in March 2014, this lighter form of engagement has translated into fewer CSC meetings and more informal engagement by Canada as the CSC chair, who maintains communication with the UN country team and UNOWAS to

stay up-to-date on challenges. While Canada does not have an embassy in Sierra Leone, its embassy in Ghana has been active in assisting the Canadian mission’s work at the PBC, which at present is focused on supporting Sierra Leone’s upcoming 2018 elections.

Regarding Sierra Leone, some of the success of its transition has been attributed to the sequence of special political missions following the withdrawal of the peacekeeping operation in 2006. The AGE report noted that Council resolution 1829 creating the peacebuilding-focused UNIPSIL in 2008 contained a number of notable features, including establishing the role of Executive Special Representative of the Secretary-General to serve as both head of the mission and resident coordinator. This seemed to facilitate integrating the work of the mission and UN country team, and to securing resources for peacebuilding activities. It also facilitated the transfer of mission functions to the country team when UNIPSIL withdrew. The CSC apparently maintained a good relationship with the mission, something that the Council called for in resolution 1829.

CAR and Guinea-Bissau

It has been more difficult to identify niches for the PBC’s CAR configuration, and to some extent the Guinea-Bissau configuration. CAR is an active conflict setting, and Guinea-Bissau has been in the midst of a political crisis for over two years, putting a hold on normal government activities and causing donors to freeze over a billion dollars for its development programme. The chair of the CAR CSC, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), recently sought to improve cooperation with the UN peacekeeping operation when he visited the country in July. Since returning, Hilale has expressed strong concern about the risk of worsening violence along religious lines, proposing that the Council conduct a visiting mission. After a country visit in July by its chair, Ambassador Mauro Viera (Brazil), the Guinea-Bissau CSC has been considering where to focus its support, including how to support preparations for the May 2018 legislative elections, which will occur amidst a very unstable political situation.

Both these two CSCs have demonstrated the opportunity for the PBC to speak more frankly than UN missions. Hilale’s briefing to the CAR CSC following his recent mission notably conveyed greater alarm about the risk of widespread violence, while Viera has recently highlighted the extent to which

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Bissau-Guinean sides have different interpretations of the Conakry Agreement, brokered by ECOWAS to get the country out of its political crisis.

P5 Perspectives

Despite such developments, discussions with P5 representatives reveal that they still perceive the PBC's contributions to the Council's work as very limited. According to one P5 diplomat, however, it is hard to evaluate the PBC's impact since the P5 and a number of other Council members at any given time also serve in the PBC, thus making it unclear how much these Council members are influenced by PBC discussions.

The sustaining peace agenda has been described by one permanent member as having helped shape discussions in the PBC. However, complaints of P5 representatives include a lack of concrete proposals or operational advice from the PBC that the Council can act on. They still perceive discussions as theoretical, while they say the Council is more focused on deliverables. PBC members, perhaps because they often do not have embassies in countries under discussion, are said to tend to focus on issues that are priority areas for their governments, rather than focusing on the particularities of the country concerned. This may have contributed to P5 scepticism regarding the new PBC focal points.

On the other hand, PBC proponents feel that some Council members are still very reluctant to allow the PBC the larger role it could play. The frailty of the relationship shows itself in the tensions over the use of "silence procedure" to obtain consensus among PBC or CSC members in the preparation of statements or reports to the Council. For many PBC members, the exercise of the silence procedure and the need to negotiate statements or reports being delivered to the Council is a way for the P5 to screen the advice and "water down" information provided to the Council. Its effect may even limit PBC members from offering proposals that they realise would likely be rejected, such as

views on the continuation of a UN mission.

Russia has been the most insistent on making use of the silence procedure. It strongly maintains that the PBC's advice should be based on a common view of its members; otherwise, PBC or CSC chairs will present positions in their national capacity. Even the framing of the PBC's recommendations to the Council can be sensitive when it appears as too prescriptive rather than suggestive. The use of the silence procedure particularly frustrates PBC members when it is required for reports by the CSC chair on country visits in which P5 members did not participate.

In general, concerns remain among the P5 over the PBC's use as an instrument to encroach upon the prerogatives of the Council. A reason cited as perhaps contributing to a positive relationship between the Burundi CSC and the Council is that Switzerland is careful not to try to influence core security issues that the Council deals with.

Revision of Note 507

Negotiations earlier this year to revise Note 507 on the Council's working methods reveals the continuing tensions between the Council and the PBC. Japan, as chair of the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Matters, steered the negotiations on Note 507, which had last been updated in 2010. During the negotiations, it proved difficult to get Russia to accept the inclusion of language from resolution 2282 on the Council's intention to engage with the PBC, whose activities Russia contended had not been very useful.

Ultimately Note 507 brought in language from resolution 2282, saying that "the members of the Security Council also acknowledge the importance of maintaining communication with the Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body and express their intention to regularly request, deliberate and draw upon its specific, strategic and targeted advice, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1645 (2005) and 2282 (2016)".

The negotiations saw Ethiopia, supported

by other elected members, revive the proposal to invite the PBC chair and CSC chairs to participate on a case-by-case basis in Council consultations. This remained unacceptable to at least some P5 members. Instead, the revised Note 507 encourages informal exchanges between the Council and the PBC and CSC chairs "as appropriate, through informal interactive dialogues." (Informal interactive dialogues are often used by the Council to engage representatives of states or organisations that cannot attend consultations). Making greater use of informal interactive dialogues to discuss shared agenda countries has been suggested as a way to substitute for the PBC and CSC chairs' inability to participate in Council consultations since this allows for interactivity among participants; it could be a way for the PBC and CSC chairs to express views while responding to questions and comments that they are unable to make in prepared statements or reports.

Another proposal that was not included in the final version of Note 507 was the prospect of joint Council-PBC missions. Japan included the idea in the section of Note 507 on Council visiting missions. Russia rejected it outright while the US expressed concerns. The idea had already proven sensitive. Previously, in March 2016, when the Council was preparing to visit West Africa, the US broke a silence procedure on a proposal to invite then-chair of the Guinea-Bissau CSC, Ambassador Patriota, to join the mission's leg to Bissau.

Overall, the Council's engagement with and its consideration of the PBC have still remained largely dependent on its various elected members that champion the PBC. Over the past year, this has been Egypt, Japan and Sweden, which seek to draw attention to the PBC in Council products or identify opportunities to engage with it. The decision to seek the PBC's involvement on the Sahel strategy came from Egypt, while without Sweden it is not clear whether the Council would have followed up with its July presidential statement on the Liberia peacebuilding plan.

Lake Chad Basin

In addition to Liberia, another example over the last year of the Council's contributing to a sustaining peace approach is the way it has addressed the Lake Chad Basin region. A Security Council visiting mission in March 2017 to Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria was organised with the aim of better

understanding the security situation, the humanitarian crisis, and the root causes of the area's problems—as outlined in its terms of reference and repeated by its co-leads throughout the visit. During the Council's meetings with government officials and UN country teams, it was notable that Council

members discussed with interlocutors such issues as the need for job creation and economic development, and even the impact of climate change and the shrinking of Lake Chad. Members were told that if the humanitarian crisis was not effectively dealt with or if root causes were not addressed, the Boko

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Haram insurgency—which had been losing ground—would continue, or a new group would emerge similar to it.

When the Council returned to New York, it adopted resolution 2349, which is divided into sections on security and protection of civilians, the humanitarian crisis, and root causes and development. Initially, there were doubts among members about whether the Council would be able to agree on a product that dealt with root causes and development,

which were thought sensitive for some countries that are cautious about the Council's engaging on these less traditional security issues which overlap with responsibilities of other UN organs. But in the end, the resolution's references to root causes and development were not the issues during the resolution's negotiation that proved difficult to agree on. As one member stated, this may have been because the visit helped create a common understanding of the crisis affecting

the region.

Council members have since discussed the Lake Chad Basin region along with the Sahel during its annual informal interactive dialogue with the PBC in June 2017. Also, as demonstrated by the Council's last meeting on the situation in September, Council members have continued to call for the region to develop a strategy that tackles the drivers that contributed to Boko Haram's emergence and longer-term development needs.

Improving PBC Support to the Security Council

A common critique by the P5 has been that the PBC has not provided added value to the Council's work. But what is the type of “specific, strategic and targeted advice” that the PBC can offer, that Council members are not already in a position to receive or cannot be provided by a UN peace operation in the country concerned?

Convening Role of the PBC

The PBC's greatest strength and comparative advantage over the Council is its convening role—its ability to bring together and meet with a diverse array of actors, including the country concerned, member states, IFIs, UN agencies, regional and subregional organisations and civil society. The Council itself in a number of its recent products on Liberia and the Sahel strategy has notably highlighted the PBC's “convening role”.

There appears to be broad agreement among PBC and Council members on the importance and potential for the PBC to make greater use of its ability to convene such actors to gain their perspectives. In doing so, it can then collect and package these views to present to the Council. Every country situation will vary, but generally the PBC could focus on providing input on socio-economic dimensions and longer-term development challenges, which the Council and UN mission can often overlook as they become focused on more day-to-day operational and political challenges. These are insights which the PBC should be well positioned to provide through its interactions with IFIs and UN country teams. The PBC's recent forays into considering the regional dimensions of peacebuilding may represent another perspective that would benefit the Council. When the PBC offers these

perspectives, it could seek to share ideas for how these needs can be addressed as part of the activities of a mission or through broader international efforts.

Alignment with the Council's Programme of Work

To develop input for the Council, last year's working methods review led by Kenya recommended that the PBC align its work with the Council's calendar and relevant meetings, emphasising the importance of the PBC's preparatory work. The Council's consideration of an issue is usually known several months in advance, while mandate expirations and renewals of peace operations often are known a year in advance. For the PBC and CSCs, this means convening meetings with IFIs, the UN country team, regional organisations and civil society—whether jointly or in separate sessions—during the months preceding the planned Council meetings. It also involves timing country visits by the CSC chair ahead of the Council meeting. As one Secretariat official notes, Council members are likely to dismiss a CSC chair's briefing if the chair has not been to the field.

Informal Interaction

The PBC can then continue to provide advice on peacebuilding needs through its statements at Council meetings, reports or letters. For more frank discussion, informal interactive dialogues can be organised between the Council and PBC members, in particular ahead of the mandate renewals of missions. Informal engagement is also considered important. The PBC chair or lead PBC members on a country situation, such as the CSC chairs, could seek to maintain regular contact with Council penholders. Other informal

opportunities to engage Council members could include CSC chairs or other relevant PBC members making themselves available to provide their insights to Council members ahead of Council visiting missions or organising, as necessary, briefings of Council experts.

Generating Resources

As one Secretariat official said, an issue that has been both the PBC's greatest draw but also its greatest failure has been its potential to marshal resources. The PBC can highlight the needs of a particular situation. This does not, however, readily translate into donor countries or the IFIs coming forward to fill such gaps. To a large extent, the difficulty seems to be that member states' diplomats in New York are typically not in a position to influence these decisions, which are usually made by their governments' development agencies. The fragmentation of the UN identified by the AGE is often replicated, sometimes even more markedly, within the governmental machineries of member states.

The PBC may still aim to fill these resource needs—and a test case is being presented by Liberia. PBC meetings on the capacity and funding gap identified for the Liberia peacebuilding plan has raised awareness among UN-based representatives, and Ambassador Skoog repeatedly draws attention to this gap during PBC meetings. It may be possible that a higher profile and more active PBC going forward—along with a detailed plan, such as that created for Liberia, which can concretely identify funding shortfalls—might be able to raise awareness that can lead member states and IFIs to become more committed to meeting such needs.

Similarly, the PBC is planning a meeting in

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December to raise awareness for a donor conference on The Gambia. A follow-up session is then envisioned for next year to assess whether donors delivered on their pledges. A challenge that seems to remain is whether the discussions in the PBC will be noticed in capitals and among IFIs, and whether such a session can impact decisions on aid that may or may not have already been made by capitals. One example of the PBC generating significant resources over the years includes Switzerland's organisation of a donor conference in 2012, where more than \$2.5 billion was pledged for Burundi's poverty reduction strategy.

In advocating for and raising awareness of countries' needs, the PBC does not necessarily need to organise meetings, the impact of which on country situations may be limited. PBC members may therefore seek other more proactive ways to assist countries, such as informally connecting relevant representatives of member states that the PBC is trying to support to organisations or private sector actors that can potentially meet needs.

Another more tempered way in which the PBC can aim to raise the resources available to a country or regional situation is through promoting increased coherence among international actors. If the PBC can prove increasingly effective at bringing together different actors and creating a better understanding of their different programmes for a country, the identification of gaps and possible areas of duplication could lead to a more efficient use of resources. Similarly, a challenge at a practical level is getting the people with influence from the relevant organisations in the same room or at meetings that can ensure that redundancies

or deficiencies that are identified are acted on. With the headquarters of many such actors outside New York and in other countries, this becomes a challenge. The decision to hold an annual dialogue between the PBC and World Bank, a critical funder, is a step in addressing such limitations.

Transitions and Sustaining International Attention

The PBC can further exercise its advisory role by providing attention to situations that the Council does not have time to monitor sufficiently or that no longer warrant its attention. When the Council requests or endorses plans or strategies that seek to address root causes of conflict situations or fragility, i.e. the Sahel strategy or the Liberian peacebuilding plan, the PBC can support the implementation of these plans. In part it can do this by providing the necessary follow-up and sustained attention that the Council is unable to provide, while being well positioned—because of its convening role—to engage with implementing partners.

As suggested by the AGE, the PBC can take the lead on situations that are undergoing transitions, especially from a peace operation to a UN country team, or passing off the Council's agenda. These are situations that usually still require the support of the international community, and again the PBC would be well positioned to consider challenges facing the country team and more broadly during the transition period after a peace operation is withdrawn, while seeking to promote coherence among the continuing programmes of international actors.

In a way, the PBC has played this role in relation to The Gambia, though this was not an official Council agenda item since the Council considered the crisis through the regional mandate of UNOWAS. Upcoming opportunities, in addition to Liberia, could be with Cote d'Ivoire and Haiti. A related opportunity for the PBC is to receive briefings from UN country teams on various country situations where there are no Council-mandated missions, providing a level of attention that currently does not exist. In general, the PBC does not always need to focus on the input it can provide to the Council. If its activities result in better meeting countries' needs and supporting their stability, this would complement the work of an already burdened Security Council. In the process, it might make P5 members more interested in the PBC's activities or perspectives.

As noted above, a challenge for the PBC remains the stigma which countries may feel if seen as a situation of continuing concern to the international community. Instead of referring to countries that the PBC considers as part of its "agenda", these may better be referred to as "PBC-supported countries". Within the PBC and PBSO, discussions have emphasised the diverse formats and levels of engagement that the PBC can use to encourage countries to overcome this concern. For countries to become more open to being discussed in the PBC, it will be necessary for the PBC's consideration to translate into tangible benefits—whether they be the resources that are available for countries, or more effective support provided by the UN country team and broader international efforts.

UN Reform, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Current efforts to improve the PBC and its relationship with the Council are occurring in the context of the Secretary-General's broader reforms to make conflict prevention and sustaining peace more central to the UN's work. As a follow-up to the Council and General Assembly resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture review, the Secretary-General is expected to submit his implementation report on the resolutions in February.

The PBSO, DPA and the UN Development Programme on behalf of the UN Development Group have been preparing this

report, which the General Assembly requested be provided to member states at least 60 days ahead of its high-level event on "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace", planned for 24-25 April 2018. The report is expected to bring together the relevant aspects of the Secretary-General's peace and security, development and management reforms as they pertain to sustaining peace. Regarding the much-anticipated options to increase, restructure, and better prioritise funding for peacebuilding activities, the report is expected to contain proposals for assessed and voluntary

contributions, as called for in the resolutions. In light of the political constraints for increasing assessed contributions and official donor assistance, it seems that options are also being developed that would rationalise or better coordinate the UN's many trust funds related to peacebuilding and propose innovative financing methods.

The UN's peacebuilding architecture was expected to be impacted by the Secretary-General's reforms, which are being designed to reduce the UN system's fragmentation. In September and October, the

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Secretary-General presented to member states his proposals for restructuring the peace and security architecture, in a report to the General Assembly and in briefings to member states, including to the PBC on 28 September.

He has proposed creating a new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), combining the strategic, political and operational responsibilities of DPA and the peacebuilding responsibilities of the PBSO. The Department would prioritize and direct capacities and resources to the prevention of conflict, mediation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and provide direction, management and support for regional offices. A new Department of Peace Operations (DPO) would be created that would manage all peacekeeping and field-based special political missions outside the purview of DPPA. A single political-operational structure under three Assistant Secretaries-General with

regional responsibilities, merging the current regional divisions of DPA and DPKO, would link the new DPPA and DPO, and would be responsible for the day-to-day management of all political and operational peace and security activities.

An increasingly prominent role appears to be envisioned for the PBSO within the new DPPA. During his briefing to the PBC, the Secretary-General repeatedly said that the PBSO would serve as the hinge that draws inputs from the development and human rights pillars into the UN's analysis. The Secretary-General is also seeking a "quantum" leap in the capacity of the PBF from its current annual goal of a \$100 million budget. Guterres' proposals have been less specific regarding the PBC, beyond emphasising the bridging role it should play, but the elevated role of the PBSO and increased budget for the PBF would portend that the PBC has

the opportunity to become significantly more active and engaged.

Against this backdrop, some member states have expressed misgivings regarding the sustaining peace agenda. Russia and some countries of the Non-Aligned Movement are concerned that the sustaining peace agenda and focus on conflict prevention could lead to increased interference in issues pertaining to states' sovereignty. Russia, in particular, has also expressed reservations regarding the Secretary-General's proposals, preferring that a clear division and separation in the responsibilities of the UN's different pillars should be maintained. Other countries that do not see themselves as fragile states have expressed concern that development funding might be diverted to greater spending on peace and security activities and that development might be increasingly "securitized".

Conclusion

The 2015 review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture occurred amidst an interest on the part of member states to strengthen how the UN carries out peacebuilding after its recent failures and descent into war in South Sudan and the CAR, and the continued instability of many other countries where the UN has been involved. A rising trend in violent conflicts further prompted renewed member state interest to see the UN become more effective in conflict prevention.

This led to a review that looked at how the whole UN system conducts peacebuilding (not only the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF), followed up strongly by member states with a willingness to embrace most of the findings and ideas put forward by the AGE. These included adopting a broader understanding of peacebuilding as preventing conflict in the first place, during conflict and after conflict, and formalising the concept of sustaining peace in the concurrent resolutions. Coinciding with

the two other review processes on peace operations and women and peace and security, this has provided a strong mandate for incoming Secretary-General António Guterres, who has embraced the sustaining peace agenda along with his focus on conflict prevention, to be reflected in broad UN reforms.

In the process, momentum has been generated to seek to revive and strengthen the PBC. Since 2015, and even beginning in 2014, the PBC has invigorated the role of its Organizational Committee, sought to move away from its restrictive agenda formats and CSCs, and expanded the array of countries and situations before it, while developing cooperation with regional organisations and IFIs.

Improving the PBC depends greatly on a more effective relationship with the Security Council, or, as the AGE stated, a "deepened commitment" from the Security Council. There are signs of new openness on the part of Council members, including the P5, to

develop ways to make better use of the PBC, for example with the Sahel strategy and Liberia. This report has set out some of the ways that the PBC can better use its convening ability and other areas of opportunity to support the Council, such as advising on countries' longer-term socio-economic needs and challenges or supporting transitions.

The objectives of the PBC always made sense conceptually, but they have been much less clear and more complicated in practical terms when the PBC has tried to fulfil its envisioned role. Attempting to serve as a bridge to make the UN's three organs—ECOSOC, the General Assembly and Security Council—work together better for more coherent peacebuilding efforts and analysis remains a challenge. The PBC now needs to translate its internal improvements and better focus into a greater perceived value to the Council and to the countries that it seeks to support.

UN Documents and Useful Additional Resources

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

[S/RES/2349](#) (31 March 2017) was on the Lake Chad Basin region.

[S/RES/2333](#) (23 December 2016) requested the Secretary-General to provide within 90 days a peacebuilding plan for Liberia when extending the mandate of UNMIL for a final period until 30 March 2018.

[S/RES/2282](#) (27 April 2016) was on the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.

[S/RES/1947](#) (29 October 2010) welcomed the PBC review report and reaffirmed the importance of the peacebuilding work carried out by the UN.

[S/RES/1646](#) (20 December 2005) decided that the five permanent members would have seats on the PBC's Organisational Committee and that the PBC will report annually to the Council.

[S/RES/1645](#) (20 December 2005) created the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund, concurrent with General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/180.

SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS

[S/PRST/2017/2](#) (20 January 2017) was on West Africa and the Sahel, which recognised the important convening role of the PBC to support UNOWAS in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

[S/PRST/2016/12](#) (28 July 2016) was on peacebuilding in Africa with a focus on institution-building.

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORTS

[S/2014/694](#) (23 September 2014) was the Secretary-General's fourth and last report on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict.

SECURITY COUNCIL LETTERS

[S/2017/692](#) (7 August 2017) was the concept note for the Council open debate on peacekeeping operations and sustaining peace.

[S/2017/282](#) (4 April 2017) was a letter from the Secretary-General transmitting the Liberia peacebuilding plan.

[S/2015/490](#) (29 June 2015) was the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Peacebuilding Architecture.

[S/2015/446](#) (17 June 2015) was the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

[S/2014/911](#) (15 December 2014) was a joint letter from the presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly endorsing the Terms of Reference for the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.

[S/2014/763](#) (24 October 2014) was input from the Secretary-General as part of preparations for the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review.

SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING RECORDS

[S/PV.8033](#) (29 August 2017) was an open debate on UN peacekeeping operations and sustaining peace.

[S/PV.7976](#) (19 June 2017) was the presentation of the PBC's tenth annual report.

[S/PV.7857](#) (10 January 2017) was a ministerial-level open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

[S/PV.7750](#) (28 July 2016) was an open debate on

peacebuilding in Africa.

[S/PV.7723](#) (22 June 2016) was the presentation of the PBC's ninth annual report.

[S/PV.7694](#) (24 May 2016) was an open debate on cooperation between the UN and regional organisations.

[S/PV.7658](#) (28 March 2016) was an open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

[S/PV.7629](#) (23 February 2016) was an open debate on the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.

[S/PV.7359](#) (14 January 2015) was a briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict and by the outgoing PBC chair, Ambassador Antonio Aguiar de Patriota.

NOTE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

[S/2017/507](#) (30 August 2017) was the new version of the compendium of Security Council working methods.

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION DOCUMENTS

[S/2017/76](#) (27 January 2017) was the PBC's tenth annual report, including an annex of recommendations informally adopted by the PBC on its working methods.

[S/2016/115](#) (4 February 2016) was the PBC's ninth annual report.

[S/2015/174](#) (11 March 2015) was the PBC's eighth annual report.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY DOCUMENTS

[A/72/525](#) (13 October 2017) was the Secretary-General's report on restructuring the UN's peace and security pillar.

[A/RES/70/262](#) (27 April 2016) was on the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.

[A/RES/65/7](#) (23 November 2010) welcomed the PBC review report and underlined the same points highlighted in Security Council resolution 1947.

[A/RES/60/180](#) (20 December 2005) was a founding document of the PBC, along with Security Council resolution 1945.

[A/59/2005](#) (21 March 2005) was the Secretary-General's report "In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all".

[A/59/565](#) (2 December 2004) was the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility".

USEFUL ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

[PSC/PR/COMM.\(DCXXXIII\)](#) (18 October 2016) was the communiqué of the AU PSC at its 633rd meeting on its partnership with the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

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