

Origins and rationale

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in 2005 at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly, the so-called World Summit (A/RES/60/1, of 24 October 2005). The decision to create this intergovernmental advisory body followed the identification of a number of deficiencies in the United Nations institutional capacities to effectively respond to the challenges of building peace in post-conflict societies. Some of the weaknesses associated with the arrangements for UN peacekeeping were already pointed out in 2000 by the [Brahimi Report](#). However, due to lack of political will from member states to effectively implement the required reforms, several of those deficiencies were restated in the 2004 [Report of the High-level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change](#). They included, *inter alia*: ineffective coordination both among United Nations organs, departments and agencies, and between the UN and external actors; failure, especially from the Security Council, in effectively including development concerns whilst addressing security issues; and the absence of adequate mechanisms to ensure sustained attention to post-conflict societies after the departure of peacekeepers. The 2005 World Summit thus offered an organisational solution to some of the identified deficiencies: the establishment of a commission for peacebuilding, as well as a multi-donor fund (the Peacebuilding Fund) and a specialised Secretariat office (the Peacebuilding Support Office).¹

Mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission

After the establishment of the PBC, Resolutions [60/180 of the UNGA](#) and [1645 of the UNSC](#) outlined specific details about the Commission. The second operative paragraph of both documents referred to the mandate of the PBC as:

- to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- to focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development;
- to provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities

¹ See our briefing paper: Fernando Cavalcante, “[The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture: Background Note](#)”, *GGI Briefing Paper* 1/2011, March 2011.

and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.

Structure of the Peacebuilding Commission

The Commission is constituted by a standing Organisational Committee (OC), a Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) and Country-Specific Configurations (CSCs), which focus on the particular context of each country in the PBC agenda. Membership in the Organisational Committee consists of: seven members selected by the Security Council; seven members elected by the Economic and Social Council; five members selected among the top providers of assessed contributions to the UN budgets and voluntary contributions to UN funds, programmes and agencies; five members selected among the top providers of military personnel and civilian police to UN missions; and seven members elected by the General Assembly, which should give due consideration in maintaining a balanced regional representation in the overall composition of the OC. Membership in the Country-Specific Configurations are case-specific and are not limited to member states, often including international financial institutions (IFIs) and civil society representatives.

Functioning

The Commission operates mainly by providing advice on peacebuilding-related topics to UN organs such as

Basic facts about the Organisational Committee

Chair of the 6th Session (2012)

A. K. Abdul Momen (Bangladesh)

Current membership*

Selected by the UNSC: China, Colombia, France, Morocco, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America

Elected by the ECOSOC: Egypt, Chile, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Spain, Ukraine and Zambia

Selected among top providers of assessed contributions: Canada, Netherlands, Japan, Norway and Sweden

Top providers of military personnel: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan

Elected by the UNGA: Benin, Brazil, Croatia, Indonesia, El Salvador, Tunisia and Uruguay

Previous PBC Chairs

5th Session, 2010-11: Eugene-Richard Gasana (Rwanda)

4th Session, 2009-10: Peter Wittig (Germany)

3rd Session, 2008-09: Heraldo Muñoz (Chile)

2nd Session, 2007-08: Yukio Takasu (Japan)

1st Session, 2006-07: Ismael Gaspar Martins (Angola)

Previous CSC Chairs

Burundi: Peter Maurer (Switzerland), Anders Lidén (Sweden) and Johan L. Løvold (Norway)

Central African Republic: Jan Grauls (Belgium)

Liberia: Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussain (Jordan)

Sierra Leone: John McNee (Canada) and Frank Majoor (The Netherlands)

the Security Council and the Secretariat. In addition, especially through the CSCs, it plays an active role in supporting the elaboration of peacebuilding strategies for each country in its agenda. There are currently six CSCs: Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone (see box on the right). For each one, there is a Chairperson who not only leads and coordinates the CSC activities, but also builds upon personal and/or national prestige to draw attention from the international community to the countries in the PBC agenda.

The most concrete outputs of the CSCs are the so-called integrated peacebuilding strategies or strategic policy frameworks. These documents are jointly elaborated with relevant stakeholders and provide mutually agreed priorities and guidelines that serve as a coherent blueprint for the activities and programmes of UN organs and departments, as well as national governments, IFIs and international donors. The integrated peacebuilding strategies aim to reflect the specific challenges and obstacles of each post-conflict context – a clear attempt to dissociate the Commission from ‘one-size-fits-all’ templates. After their adoption, these strategic documents remain ‘open’, as they go through periodic reviews that allow for timely and adequate changes that seek to reflect developments in the field. All policy frameworks hitherto adopted have emphasized the principle of national ownership, as well as of partnership and mutual accountability for the burdens and results of the peacebuilding efforts.

2010 Review

Following the UNGA and UNSC requests in 2005, the PBC was reviewed in 2010. The review process, co-facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa, took several months and involved extensive consultations with the UN membership at large. The process evinced that the Commission has underperformed in its first five years of functioning, in particular due to the long period dedicated to the consolidation of the Commission’s procedural rules, which divided membership over diplomatic matters in New York rather than substantial problems at the country level. The final [report of the co-facilitators](#) offered an authoritative register about those first years, in addition to providing the basis for plans of actions designed to address some of the identified shortcomings in the years to come.

Brief assessment

Despite warranted criticisms about its underperformance in its first few years of functioning, the Peacebuilding Commission is gradually establishing itself as an important UN entity in contemporary peacebuilding efforts. So far, its major achievements include: creating a *locus* where a development perspective may be included in considerations over peace and security matters; assisting in the development of peacebuilding programmes that gradually show improvements in the

first countries placed in the PBC agenda; and creating innovative, flexible and context-specific instruments to guide a coordinated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. As peacebuilding is a long-term process, however, it remains to be seen how the PBC activities will evolve in the coming years and the extent to which the Commission will be able to sustain attention and engagement with countries once they have left its agenda.

Basic facts about the Country-Specific Configurations

CSC-Burundi

In the agenda since 13 July 2006

Chair: Paul Seger (Switzerland)

Instrument of engagement: Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi (UN Doc. PBC/1/BDI/4, of 30 July 2007)

Priority areas: promotion of good governance; strengthening of the rule of law; reform of the security sector; and community recovery

CSC-Sierra Leone

In the agenda since 13 July 2006

Chair: Guillermo Rishchynski (Canada)

Instrument of engagement: Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (UN Doc. PBC/2/SLE/1, of 3 December 2007)

Priority areas: youth unemployment and empowerment; consolidation of democracy and good governance; restoration of justice and security sector reform; capacity-building, underscored in its broadest sense; and development of the energy sector

CSC-Guinea-Bissau

In the agenda since 19 December 2007

Chair: Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil)

Instrument of engagement: Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau (UN Doc. PBC/3/GNB/3, of 2 October 2008)

Priority areas: elections and institutional support to the electoral commission; measures to jump-start the economy; security and defence sector reform; strengthening of the justice sector, the rule of law and combat against drug trafficking; public administration reform; and social issues critical to peacebuilding

CSC-Central African Republic

In the agenda since 12 June 2008

Chair: Temporarily vacant position

Instrument of engagement: Strategic Framework for peacebuilding in the CAR (UN Doc. PBC/3/CAF/7, of 9 June 2009)

Priority areas: security sector reform, which included disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; governance and the rule of law; and the creation of development poles

CSC-Liberia

In the agenda since 16 September 2010

Chair: Staffan Tillander (Sweden)

Instrument of engagement: Statement of Mutual Commitments on Peacebuilding in Liberia (UN Doc. PBC/4/LBR/2, of 16 November 2010)

Priority areas: strengthening of the rule of law; support for security sector reform; and promotion of national reconciliation

CSC-Guinea

In the agenda since 23 February 2011

Chair: Sylvie Lucas (Luxembourg)

Instrument of engagement: Statement of Mutual Commitments on Peacebuilding in Guinea (UN Doc. PBC/5/GUI/2, of 23 September 2011)

Priority areas: national reconciliation and unity; security and defence sector reforms; and youth and women’s employment policy

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