



*A shared priority of both the United Nations and African Union is preventing the outbreak of conflict in Africa. Cooperation between the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture is key to achieving this objective.*



# Policy & Practice Brief

Knowledge for durable peace

## Then and now: How the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture is meeting its mandate

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*The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 was seen as a ground-breaking step, holding new promise for the populations of countries emerging from conflict. Five years later, despite committed and dedicated efforts, the hopes that accompanied the founding resolutions have yet to be realised. We are now at a crossroads: either there is a conscious recommitment to peacebuilding at the very heart of the work of the United Nations, or the Peacebuilding Commission settles into the limited role that has developed so far. Our consultations suggest that the membership strongly favours the former path.<sup>2</sup>*

## Executive summary

Since its creation in 2005, the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) has scored some successes in terms of increasing opportunities for financing of peacebuilding efforts and working with governments in this area. However, the broad view by many in the peacebuilding community is that the PBA has failed to live up to its mandate and the expectations peacebuilding actors had of it when it was endorsed at the 2005 World Summit.<sup>3</sup> This Policy & Practice Brief (PPB) discusses the rationale behind the creation of the PBA, the gaps it aimed to fill, and where the body has veered off track in the course of carrying out its mandate over the past 10 years. The brief concludes by advancing recommendations to various sectors in the peacebuilding community for the adaptation and advancement of post-conflict recovery efforts going forward. It notes that generally, the PBA has struggled to meet the needs of local-level stakeholders in the 10 years of its operations. In 2015, there are opportunities for the body to resolve some gaps between what actors expect and receive through enhancing communication with all stakeholders. This process would be the precursor to reforming the mandate of the PBA to meet the growing needs of post-conflict communities and enhancing its capacity.

## Introduction

Created in 2005 in response to gaps identified in the post-conflict response mechanisms of the UN, the PBA is made up of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Establishing an intergovernmental body with membership from across the UN system supported requirements for an entity through which to tackle challenges of low political will and commitment, setting priorities, and holding actors at various levels accountable to meet their obligations. The PBC was composed of seven countries from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), including the P5,<sup>4</sup> seven from the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), seven from the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), five of the top 10 troop contributors to UN peacekeeping forces, and five of the UN's top 10 financial donors. The PBC was specifically established to:

identify countries which are under stress and risk sliding towards state collapse; to organise, in partnership with the national government, proactive assistance in preventing that process from developing further; to assist in the planning for transitions between conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding; and in particular to marshal and sustain the efforts of the

international community in post-conflict peacebuilding over whatever period may be necessary.<sup>5</sup>

The resolutions establishing the PBC also called for the creation of a standing multi-donor peacebuilding trust fund, the PBF, and a small PBSO within the UN Secretariat charged with administering the PBF, supporting the PBC and coordinating peacebuilding efforts across the UN.<sup>6</sup>

## Defining peacebuilding

The term 'peacebuilding' first entered the UN vocabulary with Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace in 1992, where it was defined as 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.'<sup>7</sup> The concept was initially described in relation to a conflict cycle that passed from pre-conflict preventive diplomacy through peacemaking and peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding.<sup>8</sup> The 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report) further refined peacebuilding as 'activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is

more than just the absence of war.’ It also stated that ‘effective peacebuilding is, in effect, a hybrid of political and development activities targeted at the sources of conflict.’<sup>9</sup>

The concept of peacebuilding is commonly used in two distinct ways. Many practitioners and academics use the word as an all-encompassing term, both in scope and time frame – i.e. to refer to the overall set of security, political, humanitarian and developmental activities that occur from day one after conflict ends and prior to peace and sustainable development. However, the term also commonly refers to ‘late recovery’, or ‘peace consolidation’ – i.e. taking place after the security-intensive, peacekeeping-focused phase of recovery. The confusion in usage is evident in debates around the role of the PBC, initially designed to perform a range of early recovery functions but which, in practice, has only been asked to tackle ‘late recovery’ contexts to date.<sup>10</sup>

From the mid- to late-1990s, several international agencies created special units to address post-conflict reconstruction needs. These included the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’s Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Network which aimed to help better coordinate aid agencies’ peacebuilding activities in 1997. That same year, the World Bank adopted a framework for its involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and established the Post-Conflict Fund to ensure faster loans and grants to conflict-affected countries. In Africa, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the AU separately developed post-conflict reconstruction frameworks in June 2005 and July 2006 respectively, while in 2005 the PBA was established, providing what was widely regarded as the official peacebuilding body of the UN. In May 2007, the UN Secretary-General’s Policy Committee agreed on a conceptual understanding of peacebuilding to inform UN practice. They settled on a definition of peacebuilding as involving ‘a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.’<sup>11</sup> Expanding the definition resulted in an increase in the number of actors and institutions carrying out peacebuilding work.

## What is the Peacebuilding Architecture and why was it created?

The creation of the UN in 1945 was in response to prevailing threats to international security. As the years passed the challenges facing the world changed, necessitating global adaptation to deal with the new dynamics, among them the intra-state conflicts that characterised the post-Cold War period. This new type of conflict rarely ended in decisive military victory, nor did it result in a well-delineated post-conflict reconstruction phase. Rather, the common outcome was very fragile countries with extremely high risks of returning to violence.<sup>12</sup> The need for new mechanisms and approaches to address these challenges was evident.

With this in mind, in 2003 the then Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, established the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change which was mandated to ‘assess current threats to international peace and security; to evaluate how our existing policies and institutions have done in addressing those threats; and to make recommendations for strengthening the UN so that it can provide collective security for all in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.’<sup>13</sup> The panel’s report raised a series of problems in the UN’s approach to peacebuilding, including:

- i. inability to link decision-making on peace and security, especially at the level of the UNSC
- ii. poor coordination among UN agencies and departments, as well as between the UN and other actors
- iii. slow and inadequate financing for critical issues, especially linking to the start-up and maintenance of government institutions
- iv. poor conceptualisation of medium- and long-term strategies for countries emerging from the most security-intensive post-conflict phases, particularly following the drawdown of peacekeeping missions.<sup>14</sup>

The panel recommended the establishment of a ‘single intergovernmental organ dedicated to peacebuilding, empowered to monitor and pay close attention to countries at risk, ensure concerted action by donors, agencies, programmes and financial institutions, and mobilise financial resources for sustainable peace.’<sup>15</sup> In response, the PBC was established as an intergovernmental advisory body by corresponding resolutions of the UNGA and UNSC.

These resolutions mandated the PBC to:

- i. bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery
- ii. focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict, and to support the development of integrated strategies to lay the foundations for sustainable development
- iii. provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the UN, develop best practices, help ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.<sup>16</sup>

The PBC's real innovation, however, was in its country-specific configurations. Considering that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to peacebuilding, and that every country requires a unique response to its challenges, each nation on the PBC's agenda had to have a distinctive format, drawing not only upon the 31 PBC members, but from the country itself, international financial institutions (IFIs), regional organisations, neighbouring states, and key bilateral partners. Broadly, the main aim of the PBC was to make available a space where all stakeholders involved in a country's recovery could agree on a common strategy and set of priorities to guide action by national and international actors alike.<sup>16</sup>

The PBC's start-up was slow, but by September 2006 the first two countries on its agenda – Burundi and Sierra Leone – had been adopted and the announcement of the first allocation of funds to these countries made. One year later, in December 2007, Guinea-Bissau was added, followed by Central African Republic (CAR) in May 2008, Liberia in October 2010 and Guinea in February 2011.

## Reflections on the mandate of the PBA

The PBA's challenges mainly emanate from its mandate, gaps between reality and expectations of implementation, and overly high hopes of its efficacy. The PBA did not and does not have the capacity, field presence or technical expertise to support planning and strategic engagement, or to provide technical advice to all who need it.<sup>18</sup> It cannot compete with some of the traditional donors or international actors in the peacebuilding community. There have also been challenges with the fact that its mandate

has not been clearly communicated and expectations discussed. Inadequate understanding of what the PBA can and should be doing has resulted in disillusionment with the body.<sup>19</sup>

Initially, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, as well as the World Summit envisioned an institution which would build synergies between UN branches, and ensure greater coherence and coordination, as opposed to a new stand-alone body. However, as it was being operationalised, the PBA became caught up in the politics of the time and political compromises between those involved in its creation were made. Whilst the PBA was conceived as a body which could be used to leverage states in the South, it has no decision-making power of its own and hence not much influence in the UN.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the PBC has contributed to preventing relapses into conflict in Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The body, however, was unable to get the UNSC to pay attention to CAR and Guinea-Bissau before the former reverted to conflict and the latter went through an unconstitutional change of government. The prevailing tensions in Burundi, as well as the forthcoming elections, will test the PBC's ability to effectively galvanise the international community to support conflict prevention initiatives.<sup>21</sup>

Further, the PBC was especially envisioned as an entity that would support actors to agree on common peacebuilding strategies which would be implemented with local support in long-term sustainable projects. The PBSO's role was to provide strategic input, alongside national governments, to encourage coherence and coordination as well as local accountability and ownership. However, the PBC and PBSO's intended strategic roles were diluted during the development of the PBC, with the consequence that engagements with governments were handed over to national offices in-country, decreasing interactions between the PBA and national authorities and counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, the envisioned PBA would play a role in developing both early warning and lessons learned documentation and sharing capacities in the UN. Despite the fact that other UN sectors which monitored political developments and advised the secretary-general existed, there was no repository of information and lessons learned accessible to guide UN missions and enhance the knowledge of peacebuilding officials in permanent missions. This task was originally assigned to the PBSO but, due to insufficient capacity, the project was eventually

sidelined. In its attempts to take over this role, the PBC formed a Working Group on Lessons Learned. Unfortunately, the group was unable to generate the type of information envisioned by practitioners in the field, and the repository is yet to be created.<sup>23</sup>

Some member states hoped that the PBA would lead in achieving consensus on a shared definition of peacebuilding. Early discussions within the PBC and PBSO focused on what the concept meant and whether these bodies should strive to forge a common conceptual understanding for use throughout the UN system. There is still no widely accepted definition of what peacebuilding constitutes, who performs it or even on the basic time frame for engagement with instruments of the PBA.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, understanding the PBA and its ability to achieve its mandate must be based on an appreciation that the PBA is restricted by the responses of member states and is reliant on their contribution to post-conflict recovery interventions. Furthermore, the UN is not the only actor to work in post-conflict contexts; thus ensuring coherence in interventions involving multiple stakeholders, including the UN, external and local actors, and the PBC is crucial. Strengthening coherence is widely viewed as the starting point to creating relevant spaces where actors can come together to develop common peacebuilding strategies. However, this is not always easy to achieve.<sup>25</sup>

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There is a gap between understanding and implementing the mandate of the PBA. This is a recurring challenge, which came up in the 2010 UN Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and is yet to be dealt with. The PBA's value lies not in its technical knowledge, immediacy to the field or linkages with operations, but in its composition and promise to enhance coordination in peacebuilding missions. Misunderstanding and miscommunication about the mandate and capabilities of the PBA have led to a lot of its challenges in post-conflict development and peacebuilding.<sup>26</sup>

## The challenges thus far for the Peacebuilding Architecture

Over the 10 years of its existence, the PBA has had both challenges and successes. Sierra Leone is a noteworthy achievement. A 2009 study by the International Peace Institute found that the PBC had enabled the executive representative of the secretary-general (ERSG) to bring UN actors on board with a joint vision for Sierra Leone. ERSG Michael von der Schulenburg then petitioned the PBC to provide the political support that he needed to exercise his role as coordinator of the UN on the ground, which helped promote a more coherent in-country approach.<sup>27</sup> Further, the PBC's accomplishments in bringing various actors together and building confidence among key national and international stakeholders, through ongoing and comprehensive exchanges on immediate peacebuilding needs are acknowledged. The entity has also increased international attention to the countries on its agenda, making a difference in key contexts. It has, however, struggled in its resource mobilisation role, and there is little evidence to show that there is increased or fresh funding (apart from PBF funds) being directed to nations by virtue of their being on the PBC's agenda. In addition, current challenges in CAR and South Sudan also highlight more gaps in the power and mandate of the PBA.<sup>28</sup>

Reasons for successes or failures in the different countries vary. The sections below outline common challenges facing the PBA and provide some suggestions for the peacebuilding community going forward.

### ***Changing nature of conflict***

Since 2005, the PBA has helped to create a more consolidated approach and understanding that peacebuilding means coordination and focus on preventing relapse into conflict. The PBF has particularly supported an expanded understanding of peacebuilding beyond traditional views, by bankrolling political transitions to prevent relapses into conflict. In addition, the PBA has made the need for early and sustained engagement in post-conflict situations an essential aspect of peacebuilding.<sup>29</sup> Despite this commitment, however, the changing dynamics of conflict seriously impact how the PBA is interpreted and highlight that adaptation is necessary to ensure consistent responses to the challenges on the ground. Over the past decade, interstate conflicts have given way to intra-state conflicts, as well as demographic shifts and technological

advancements which affect how conflicts emerge and can be managed. When considered against the background of rapid urbanisation into unplanned cities, it becomes clear how immense pressures on social amenities would result in conflicts sparked by competition among different social groups.<sup>30</sup>

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Inequality, poverty and unemployment contribute to complex conflicts, as do popular uprisings, the politicisation of religion and increased numbers of armed militant groups, all of which call for innovative ways of resolving problems.<sup>31</sup> No single actor has the necessary capacity to address all these challenges. The core triggers of new forms of conflict and perceived injustices must be analysed and understood in context if solutions are to be found and applied. Further, issues around democratisation and weak political parties are sources of conflicts in many African countries. In these nations, succession planning should be considered as a sustainable conflict prevention strategy.<sup>32</sup>

The international community needs to move beyond planning for post-conflict contexts, to focusing on continuous engagement in conflict prevention and political transformation. In the meantime though, contemporary tools with which to mitigate conflicts and developmental approaches to address root causes and lay foundations for sustainable peace are needed. Actors would also do well to integrate development, conflict management and trauma-healing approaches into peacebuilding.

***Funding and resource mobilisation***

A principle function of the PBA is to fill a critical gap in resource mobilising for peacebuilding. Post-conflict contexts require both ‘quick-funding’ and longer-term financing. In many cases, time frames were considered too slow to meet the needs of fast-paced peace processes and funds which could be utilised between an early emergency phase of a conflict and its termination were vital to the functioning of peacebuilding processes. The PBF was well placed to bridge this gap.<sup>33</sup>

The PBF was created partly to help meet requirements for agile funding. It thus has two

financing programmes: the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) and the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF). The IRF funding supports initiation of peacebuilding and recovery needs. It is a flexible and quick funding tool for single or multiple projects with a time frame shorter than one year. The PRF is designed to support more structured peacebuilding processes. It is driven by national actors and based on joint assessment and development of priority plans, in coordination with national actors and the PBF. It takes a longer-term approach, implemented in collaboration with national and international actors and managed by the UN country office and a joint steering committee.<sup>34</sup> Reports from independent reviews over the past five years indicate that the PBF has grown and contributed significantly to efforts on the continent, through its support for a broad range of peacebuilding initiatives and the risks it takes to back initiatives that traditional donors would not.<sup>35</sup>

However, despite these innovative approaches to financially support both short- and medium-term processes, there are challenges with long-term engagement and making additional resources for post-peacekeeping recovery available. The PBC’s mandate also includes addressing post-peacekeeping gaps in funding. Through donor conferences accompanying peace operations, funding partners and multilateral institutions pledge additional resources for peace operations. Yet, when peacekeeping troops depart, diplomatic attention and resources fall away. The PBC, with the participation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as observers, was envisioned as an avenue through which leading and interested member states could channel resources for post-peacekeeping recovery.<sup>36</sup>

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An innovative approach to financing in the context of the work of the PBC has been through coordination between the African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank and UN. The AfDB’s Fragile States Facility highlights issues of instability in Africa and contributes funds to prevent relapses into conflict.

The body focuses on institution-building and public administration. It was created in 2007 to mobilise additional resources from donors to assist fragile states with infrastructure development, gender and agriculture programmes. The fund also facilitates the participation of countries with limited resources in debt relief programmes.<sup>37</sup> In the future the PBA, through the PBF, would do well to forge relationships with IFIs and traditional donors to support larger projects on more long-term bases. This would not only build up strategic links between partners, but also bolster coherence and coordination on key peacebuilding policies and strategies.<sup>38</sup>

If the PBF is to effectively carry out its mandate, it needs to broaden its funding approach and be more flexible. Consideration should be given to funding civil society organisations and local initiatives, and not only directing funding through UN programmes. This approach would also ensure better accountability for funds as well as improved sustainability. Further, any UN funding must be supplemented by national systems to ensure local involvement, buy-in and responsibility for the initiative. Lastly, the funding community needs to be grown, and efforts to source longer-term financing options extended and better coordinated.

### ***Low coherence, coordination and global accountability***

The PBA is charged with encouraging coherence, within the UN itself, and between the UN and external actors. It is also tasked with ensuring the development and documentation of best practices to support better approaches to post-conflict recovery. When the concept of coherence in peacebuilding is unpacked, it can be understood as ‘the effort to direct the wide range of activities undertaken in the political, governance, development, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system towards common strategic objectives.’<sup>39</sup> Since the common goal of peacebuilding is to reduce and avoid further tensions by targeting root causes of conflict, the importance of coherence lies in guiding *all* peacebuilding strategies and actors to prioritise the shared aim of preventing further conflict and contributing to political, economic, cultural and societal transformation for the achievement of positive or structural peace.<sup>40</sup>

Despite a common understanding of what is meant by effective coherence, it is not always easily attainable in practice. The ‘coherence dilemma’

is well known in the peacebuilding policy and research community. It refers to the argument that peacebuilding missions will be more efficient, and thus have a more meaningful impact, when the different peacebuilding agents involved have a common objective.<sup>41</sup> This is based on the shared understanding that lack of coherence is a critical shortcoming of peacebuilding interventions and, thus, improving coherence would lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness. This line of thinking is evident in the UN’s move towards integrated missions and the ‘Delivering as One’ initiative. Yet, even with these changes, empirical cases show what appear to be persistent and intrinsic limitations to the degree to which coherence is attainable in peacebuilding systems, thus the dilemma.<sup>42</sup> Responses to this quandary would typically involve enhancing policies and frameworks which would promote greater coherence and, as a result, more succinct peacebuilding interventions.<sup>43</sup> Practically, however, in spite of the best efforts of peacebuilding practitioners over many years to test various approaches, models and tools to achieve optimal levels of coherence, it remains an elusive goal.

The PBC, if it engaged more strategically with national counterparts and UN personnel on the ground, could draw a range of actors, including IFIs, local organisations, international actors and governments to work together in implementing national strategies. Sierra Leone, and the PBC’s ability to unite all UN actors behind the government’s national peacebuilding strategy there, is often cited as a model for PBC engagement worthy of replication in future cases.<sup>44</sup> Despite this, however, the PBC’s ability to drive coordination among international actors has been limited.

Many UN organs and development agencies are directly accountable to their headquarters, not to personnel working in conflict-affected areas, which raises some challenges. The UN is viewed as having more allegiance to its own systems, which are linked to its plans. Often, this form of accountability undermines the UN’s effectiveness because goals are not always in line with local needs, but follow globally identified priorities.<sup>45</sup>

It is important, however, to ensure that approaches are relevant, by using adaptive management techniques. An example of a successful tactic is the ‘local accountability mechanisms and bottom-up coherence’ developed by the UN in Burundi. Local members’ capacities were enhanced by strong

partnerships between country-level civil society members, government officials and community members who gave the UN regular and credible feedback to improve implementation. This bottom-up coherence enables the UN to better address real issues on the ground. The joint steering committee developed by the PBF in each participating country is an example of this type of coherence, where common targets are developed and shared projects implemented.<sup>46</sup>

The peacebuilding community should understand that the UN is but one actor. If member states are truly committed to supporting countries in their quest for sustainable peace, they need a mechanism that can look across the performance of the entire international community – the UN and bilateral actors – and host countries alike and help them to do better, with one common agenda and strategic goal.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Relations between the United Nations and African Union***

If the PBA is to achieve its mandate of bringing together all relevant actors to ensure integrated strategies on peacebuilding for sustainable development, working together in a more transparent and coordinated manner will go a long way towards ensuring clearer understanding of peacebuilding by those involved. Strategically, the most important regional relationship for the UN is with the AU. African capacities are an important resource for UN peacekeeping, currently contributing approximately 45 per cent of the UN's uniformed personnel.<sup>48</sup> Further, the AU is able to deploy much faster to post-conflict situations than the UN, due to standby brigades at the level of the regional economic communities (RECs) which are able to provide forces towards AU missions.<sup>50</sup> The support of the UN is a critical enabler for AU operations, providing political support and legitimacy, and the UN is an important exit strategy partner of the AU.<sup>49</sup> The question should not be which institution to engage with, but how to work with both towards a common goal. The UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur is a good example of the two institutions working together to stabilise a situation.

However, past experiences of UN/AU collaboration have not always been positive, with insufficient coherence in decisions taken and support for each other. In many instances, while the AU called for 'African leadership' rather than external intervention, the UN criticised AU member states' lack of initiative in implementing their own agendas. This was the

situation in Liberia when the country and other African actors sought to focus on transitional justice processes, while the UN funded other programmes.<sup>51</sup> Another example is the AU's refusal to follow the UN and support the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on 3 July 2009.<sup>52</sup> This move could be perceived as a protest in response to the perception that the ICC only targets African countries, or as one aimed at showing independence from the UN. Regardless, it appears there is an imbalance of power between these two multilateral organisations which should be rectified to support enhanced coherence in post-conflict interventions.

A common priority of both the AU and UN is to prevent the outbreak of conflict in Africa. The UN needs to ensure continuous support for AU operations that are critical for the maintenance of international peace and security. African peace operations represent regional and local responses to global problems and thus ensure a stronger element of global accountability. However, many African conflicts are also considered global in the sense that they are heavily influenced, if not driven, by external factors. Effective African peace operations, therefore, represent a significant contribution to the common good, as well as allowing for better understanding of local and regional elements of the global agenda.<sup>53</sup>

Further, it is important to align the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy and the UN PBA in order to prioritise and tackle the same issues on the continent. Also crucial is a supportive environment, as well as shared commitment to upholding the same mandate among actors.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned above, there have been times, especially on issues of international justice, where the two bodies have opposed each other. Strategically, the UN and AU need to foster a common narrative that is mutually reinforcing and respectful of each other's roles. Operationally, the two should work on developing mechanisms to ensure the provision of strategic guidance and joint guidelines on transitions, so that it becomes easier for both organisations to involve each other from the earliest stages in assessments, planning, coordination mechanisms, mission support, benchmarks and evaluation.<sup>55</sup> The Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security,<sup>56</sup> signed by the AU Department for Peace and Security and the UN Office to the AU in March 2014, and the Common African Position

on the UN Review of Peace Operations,<sup>57</sup> released in April 2015, should be used as the basis for this improved relationship. Both documents contain resolutions and commitments for an improved working relationship and cooperation at all levels, which would vastly improve peacebuilding missions on the continent.

The peacebuilding community should uphold commitments made in the Common African Position on the UN Review of Peace Operations, which promotes the idea of improved coherence and coordination between the UN and AU. Some of these commitments include more meetings between the PBC and relevant components and organs of the African Union Commission (AUC) to unpack priorities and promote cooperation. Transparency should be encouraged, and regular desk-to-desk exchanges and joint initiatives prioritised. For instance, the AUC and the PBSO can jointly undertake analyses of countries to identify regional drivers and root causes of conflict, as well as opportunities for peacebuilding. Desks can also exchange reports so that the PBC is informed about the initiatives of the AU, RECs and regional mechanisms. Lastly, the PBC can commission periodic peacebuilding audits that take stock of progress made in countries towards meeting medium- to long-term strategic goals, to ensure that international and regional attention is kept on addressing root causes and involving actors at all levels.<sup>58</sup>

### ***The role of non-state actors***

The value of promoting local ownership in peacebuilding initiatives is clear, but not easy to achieve. Local ownership refers to the principle that ‘the future direction of a particular country should be in the hands of the people of that country, i.e. the transition should be country-led and country-owned. The future of a society should not be determined by external actors.’<sup>59</sup> Fostering local ownership, upon which coherence depends, often bypasses an understanding that within the complexity of peacebuilding environments there is a variety of perspectives inherent in the realities of local communities and that, consequently, there is no such thing as ‘the local’ or even ‘the national government’. Variant perspectives may have been part of the conflict and that same diversity may continue to fundamentally determine what different local actors believe the country should look like in the future.<sup>60</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to pull together a coherent vision from the various perspectives

and, furthermore, to identify who exactly to hold responsible for the differing perspectives. Facilitating cohesion among diverse sectors and individuals to achieve an overarching objective is an overwhelming responsibility. Beyond the identification of local leadership, a major challenge is strengthening the capacities of these influencers by extending appropriate resources and/or training to them.<sup>61</sup>

International actors need to make significant efforts to support national ownership and political will and to ensure that there is accountability and cooperation from all actors involved, both local and international. One of the overarching challenges for the international community, and more specifically the UN, in supporting efforts to stabilise conflict zones and sustain peace, is how to involve local actors. Often, engaging appropriate local actors requires building the capacities of some of them to access and interact at higher and more visible political levels. The definition of civil society must be expanded to include both local and international civil society, as well as the private sector. Furthermore, the private sector should be regarded as an important stakeholder with a role to play in funding projects or supporting resource mobilisation efforts.<sup>62</sup>

Civil society should be understood to include the private sector, international NGOs as well as local level initiatives. Better coordination between international actors, the UN, and civil society can be achieved through improved interactions between civil society and regional organisations. The PBC should initiate annual meetings with these groups, which would ensure that the PBC can live up to the objective set out in UNSC Resolution 60/180<sup>63</sup> to engage directly with civil society.

## **Recommendations**

As we enter the third phase of the PBA, it is important for the international community to evaluate how it should continue if it is to be more effective in existing and future conflict situations. The recommendations below are not exhaustive, and the onus lies on the peacebuilding community to enhance both the PBA and peacebuilding practice as a whole for effective post-conflict interventions.

### ***For the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture***

- i. The mandate of the PBA and the expectations those in the peacebuilding community have of it need to be clarified. This can be done by

reaffirming its obligations, and effectively managing communication from the PBA's organs to the wider public and stakeholders. Alternatively, the mandate of the PBA needs to be redefined so it better responds to needs on the ground.

- ii. Better coherence and coordination are needed between local and international actors, as well as between international actors, and even within the UN itself. Review of the situation could be carried out, focusing on the operational modalities of the PBA. Emphasis should be placed on examining how the PBA relates with the UNSC. Evaluating internal coherence at the UN would be the first step towards aligning decision-making within the entity's various structures.
- iii. The PBF needs to broaden its approach to funding and become more flexible in its resource mobilisation efforts. Whilst it is acknowledged that the PBF takes more risks by financing projects that traditional donors would not, it is still important to align its reporting frameworks so they are more adaptable to situations on the ground.
- iv. The PBF should also consider funding civil society organisation and local initiatives, and not only channelling funding through UN programmes as this will allow for more direct accountability for funds, as well as enhanced sustainability of local projects.
- v. Any funding from the UN must be supplemented by national systems to ensure greater local involvement and buy-in, as well as accountability and efforts to prevent corrupt practices.
- vi. There should be more meetings between the PBC and AUC to promote coherence around strategic priorities for peacebuilding in Africa. These should include desk-to-desk meetings in the field, as well as at the highest levels, as per commitments made in the Common African Position on the UN Review of Peace Operations and Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.
- vii. The PBC should commission periodic peacebuilding audits that assess progress in specific countries towards meeting medium- to long-term strategic goals, so as to involve all actors and ensure international and regional attention to addressing root causes of conflict (international, regional, national and local).

### ***For the peacebuilding policy community as a whole***

- i. More investment is needed by those involved for a more comprehensive understanding of the fundamental dynamics of a conflict. Particular attention should be paid to the economics of a conflict, and to the underlying politics fuelling tensions.
- ii. Enhanced coherence and cooperation among donors to allow for greater transparency in projects and ensure long-term and sustainable funding for activities is also important. The notion of who to engage with in post-conflict situations should be expanded beyond just civil society to include the private sector, international NGOs and local initiatives. This will ensure that all actors working on post-conflict development are involved, thus enhancing the potential for more strategic approaches.
- iii. Individual peacebuilding efforts need to be integrated in the quest to stabilise countries emerging from conflict. UN interventions need to take a 'whole of system' approach, with political, protection and assistance projects supporting their activities, as well as working with local actors to stabilise the situation.
- iv. The AU should make efforts to uphold commitments made in the Common African Position on the UN Review of Peace Operations to work with the UN in a more integrated fashion and on an equal footing. In addition, civil society and other peacebuilding actors should be given the power to hold those involved accountable to these resolutions and ensure follow-through.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it is clear that there is a challenge with the mandate of the PBA. The PBA which exists now is certainly not the body that was envisioned. Compromises were made in its creation and over time it has shaped up differently. Despite this, the PBA has had some successes in establishing in-country programmes and working with national governments to ensure sustainable post-conflict development. However, by and large it would seem that the PBA has struggled to meet the needs of actors on the ground. The year 2015 offers the international community the opportunity to reflect on whether the PBA should continue as it is, or take a new form. Going forward there are three options: the PBA can maintain the *status quo* and continue working with the challenges it has,

hoping perhaps for minor impacts; it can clarify stakeholders' expectations of it and effectively communicate its mandate and niche to resolve some gaps between what actors expect and receive. In its turn, the international peacebuilding community can consider reforming the mandate and capacity of the PBA to meet the growing needs of post-conflict communities. As we await the outcome of the Advisory Group of Experts' report on the review of the PBA, what definitely needs to be decided is how recommendations made will be operationalised in the peacebuilding field to ensure that at the next review, we are not discussing the same challenges and gaps in implementation.

## Endnotes

- 1 The author extends her appreciation to Senzo Ngubane, Dr Cedric de Coning, John Ahere and Dr Andreas Velthuisen for adding value to this brief through sharing their comments and constructive feedback on earlier drafts. She would also like to thank Petronella Mugoni for her support, edits and substantive contribution to this publication. Without the support of this team, the paper would be a shadow of what it is now.
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