

Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting

Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture: The perspective of civil society and the EU

Wednesday 15 April 2015, Brussels

Report¹

The purpose of the meeting was to gather the EU and civil society's perspectives on the relevance of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (UN PBA) to the needs of countries emerging from violent conflict and will identify options for the future development of the PBA as well as the potential points of influence for the EU, EUMS and civil society organisations.

The meeting took place in the context of the review of the UN PBA conducted by an Advisory Group of Experts. EU Member States (EUMS) have taken leading roles in the UN PBA, and Sweden is currently chairing the Peacebuilding Commission. This meeting fits into a wider discussion on the reviews of other UN and international mechanisms and policies related to peace and security (UNSC 1325, peace operations, etc.).

The meeting brought together civil society experts involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to provide their input into the assessment and into the EU's possible approach to the process.

Background

The UN Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) was agreed in 2005 so that international actors would co-operate to develop more coherent and better-funded responses to countries emerging from violent conflict (including peacekeeping, development, humanitarian and human rights aspects) in order to prevent relapse into conflict again. It is comprised of the [Peacebuilding Commission](#) (PBC), the [Peacebuilding Fund](#) (PBF) and the [Peacebuilding Support Office](#) (PBSO). EU Member States (EUMS) have taken leading roles in the UN PBA, and Sweden is currently chairing the PBC.

EUMS could play an important role in building consensus during this period. Options for reform include providing the political and financial support needed for the PBA to fulfil its original mandate; narrowing its mandate or to more accurately reflect its activity and impact.

¹ The points listed here are an informal summary of the comments made by participants during the meeting; they are not a comprehensive list of comments and do not represent the views of the organisers.

Key points

1. Observations on the context of the UNPBA review and 2015 UN Reviews

A majority of participants highlighted the fact that the review of the PBA should be conducted in close coordination with other ongoing reviews of UN peace operations and the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security as well as with the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (g7+ countries) and the post-2015 development agenda (Sustainable Development Goals).

There are no institutionalised ways to connect all three 2015 UN review processes, which are also different in that some are intergovernmental and others are not. During the meeting, this was particularly emphasised for the UNSC 1325 and the lack of linkages with the Global Study. Some commented that UN Member states' attention will focus more on the UN peace operations review and the Post-2015 framework on development rather than the reviews of UNSC 1325 and UNPBA.

It was brought forward that efforts to “cross-fertilise” the reviews are made, including sharing draft background papers for the reviews across the panels, gathering panel members physically and appointing one expert to both expert panels for the UNSC 1325 review and the Peace operations review simultaneously.

The Advisory Group of Experts, who met with Brussels-based civil society on 1 April, and peacebuilding practitioners in the meeting all emphasised the importance of anticipating the future trends of conflict and identifying concrete options to adapt to them. The trends raised in the meeting included²:

- **The Americas are the most violent region in the world;**
- **Post-Cold War context:** the current context is very different from the post-Cold War world which is at the basis of the UN peace infrastructure and space for building peace is shrinking as responses to conflict are securitised and counter-terrorism legislation is applied to peacebuilders in certain contexts;
- **Large-scale investments:** development projects related to large scale infrastructure building will displace large masses of populations and create conflicts;
- **Urban violence:** cities will be the focal point of violence, which highlights the need to include the city-level dimension as a key frontier for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

2. Observations on the UN PBA and the UN capacity for peacebuilding

- It has been regularly suggested that the term “UN Peacebuilding Architecture” is used in a broader way, to refer not only to the smaller construction of the PBC, PBF and PBSO but

² Most trends listed in the meeting are based on the [White paper on Peacebuilding](#) (February 2015): coordinated by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, it includes thematic papers and 12 regional assessments and was built on a multi-stakeholders approach (from practitioners to government and private sector). It focuses on trends on peacebuilding practice, visions for building peace and bringing practitioners' perspective.

also to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and to specific areas of work of the Department for Political Affairs and UN Development Programme (UNDP);

- Being part of the UN system makes the PBA dependent on donors, compete with other UN agencies in-country, but it also gives it legitimacy, global presence and authority, as opposed to other actors; it can be a catalyser, having the capacity to mobilise both funding and political support for a country strategy;
- The **PBF**'s reputation picked up since 2010, as it developed for itself a clear business plan, proved to be well run and is able to deliver full proposals in as little as three weeks; it was also successful in promoting gender sensitive programmes and incentivising the coordination of actors at country level;
- The **PBSO** leadership is stronger than it has ever been;
- The **PBC**'s added value resides in advocacy and political support. Composed of experienced diplomats, the PBC proved to have a strong potential to mobilise political support and create momentum around ideas and strategies. It faces 3 sets of criticisms:
 1. It did not stopped major crises from emerging (e.g. Central African Republic, Afghanistan) – which participants in the meeting have dismissed as ill-founded;
 2. The PBC process tends to overburden the UN Country Team instead of supporting it, as it can attract peacebuilding funding but does not mobilise other types of resources (such as political support) as it should be;
 3. UN Member States are using it to influence or design peacebuilding strategies, often without expertise.
- **Relation between UNHQ and in-country offices:** The effectiveness of the UN PBA relies more than other institutions on the relationships between UN Country Teams, the PBSO, UNHQ (SG Representatives) and the Configuration Chair; an ideal configuration is for a PBSO expert (expertise on the proposal process and peacebuilding best practices) to work in-country with the UN Country Team (geographic expertise) to design strategies and programmes, involving local civil society and stakeholders;
- **Links between UNPBA and UNSC:** while the PBC has been a useful venue to raise issues pertaining to the UNSC mandate (including by linking in-country work to UNSC); however, according to some participants, there is little potential in trying to coordinate further the two bodies for the two reasons:
 1. UNPBA countries do not rank very high on the UNSC's agenda;
 2. UNSC is territorial and will not let other institutions step on its prerogatives.
- The **g7+** could be an excellent partner of the UN PBA if it regenerates its role as a support group to countries in situation of fragility with concrete objectives;
- Some **UN Member States** consider pursuing membership to the PBA as an alternative to UNSC membership or support to UN Peacekeeping operations; in the 2015 context, the UN PBA may be at risk of being side-lined and surviving the review by lack of concrete proposals or support for new options.

Recommendations on the future of the UNPBA

- In doing the review, the AGE, UNGA and UNSC should focus on the effectiveness of coordination and the distribution of funding at country level rather than in New York;
- The PBF should have its budget doubled (up to \$100 million per year), to maximise its potential as a well-functioning fund that is leanly administrated, responsive and building a strong body of knowledge and experience;
- The PBC should focus on mobilising political support and creating momentum behind strategies, rather than attempt to design the strategies;
- Some participants suggested that attention should be put on creating functioning

relationships and mobilising expertise, by appointing the right people with the right skills and experience at the right position, rather than attempting to reform the whole structure of the UN PBA;

- UN peacebuilding country strategies, involving the UN PBA and all relevant UN departments and agencies, should be developed by peacebuilding experts (external or UN staff) and coordinated in-country;
- The UNPBA is most effective when relationships between the staff and delegates of the various UN bodies work together in person; a PBSO expert (expertise on the proposal process and peacebuilding best practices) to work in-country with the UN Country Team (geographic expertise) to design strategies and programmes, involving local civil society and stakeholders;
- The UN PBA should be used as a catalyser for peacebuilding which can bridge institutional silos and, to that effect, should engage meaningfully and systematically with local and international civil society as stakeholders who engage with various peacebuilding actors;
- The UN peacebuilding architecture at large should put local ownership (as opposed to national ownership) at the centre of their strategies, which takes years in the making;
- The post-2015 process to determine new Sustainable Development Goals could be used as an entry point to make linkages between all three UN reviews of 2015, as it catalyses several peacebuilding-related issues (e.g. urban safety, violence against women, etc.).

3. Observations on the role of regional organisations, the EU and civil society in the UNPBA and UN peacebuilding

On civil society:

- There is a need for local and international civil society to have a meaningful dialogue with the PBA (this recommendation that has been regularly made since the creation of the UNPBA, including in the 2013 review of the UNPBF and 2014 gender review of the PBF); there are two areas where it is most required:
 1. Designing peacebuilding strategies and programmes – in this area, civil society tends to be perceived as subcontractors by the PBA;
 2. Accessing peacebuilding funds – the UN agencies tend to protect funding and programmes guardedly.

On the EU and Member States:

- The Instrument for Stability (IfS)/ Instrument contributing to stability and peace (IcSP) was highlighted by many participants as a model of supporting and engaging with civil society but also as a concrete peacebuilding tool that is conflict-sensitive and flexible enough; in that sense, the EU has a role to play in providing lessons learned from the IfS/IcSP; other participants suggested that the IcSP join forces with the PBF in specific areas of work or countries;
- The EU Member States are members of the EU, the UN, the PBC, the UNSC, the IDPS, etc.: while they might be pursuing different interests in different platforms some participants highlighted the fact that it can be approached as a consolation prize; they collectively have the ability and the influence to catalyse political support and resources behind the UN PBA, and also to propose joint responses;

On regional organisations:

- Many participants in the meeting raised the potential role of regional organisations in peacebuilding; the PBC should make systematic a meaningful participation of regional and sub-regional actors in its deliberations - although defensiveness on mandates is a challenge;
- The private sector was also highlighted as a potential peacebuilding partner of UN agencies and the PBA - based on several examples of successful cooperation;

Combining both perspectives of regional organisations and civil society, a list of useful recommendations for meaningful engagement with civil society is available in [Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding - the Role of Civil Society](#) (October 2014) co-authored by KROC, GPPAC and Alliance for Peacebuilding.

Recommendations on the role of civil society, the EU and regional organisations in the UNPBA and UN peacebuilding

The EU and EU Member States should:

- Coordinate its messages with that of individual EUMS during the review of the UN PBA;
- Play a more political role in the UN PBA, i.e. mobilise support for comprehensive political settlements, as EU Member States collectively have the ability and the influence to catalyse political support;
- Bring forward the best practices and lessons learned from the EU experience in supporting peacebuilding and engaging with civil society, in particular the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace;
- Explore with the Member States the idea of a Group of Friends of the UNPBA to be better monitor and mobilise support for its activities;
- Step up the support to conflict prevention capacities of EU delegations and increase engagement with non-state actors, i.e. civil society, private sector, regional organisations, etc.;

Civil Society should:

- Enhance its ability to monitor the UNPBA and UN peacebuilding mechanisms mobilise resources to make concrete recommendations to the UNPBA review;
- Not set expectations on the PBA that are disconnected with the reality of multilateral processes (intergovernmental structure; relations with national governments, etc.).

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN)

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The second phase of the CSDN will last from 2014 to 2016. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).

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