



“The Challenge of Sustaining Peace”: The Report on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture

At the request of the General Assembly and the Security Council the *Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture* prepared a report titled “The Challenge of Sustaining Peace” in June 2015. This report represents the first part of a two-stage review of the role and positioning of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) as well as other UN entities active in peacebuilding.

The UN Peacebuilding Architecture

Against the backdrop of increasing criticism of UN peace operations, in 2004 the *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* noted that the UN system lacked institutional structures aimed at preventing states from collapsing or at supporting countries in their transition from war to peace. Consequently, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan endorsed the panel’s recommendations to create a commission in order to centralize and coordinate the actions taken by the UN and to establish an office and a fund to assist countries emerging from conflict. These three organs together are commonly referred to as the “UN Peacebuilding Architecture” (PBA).

- **PBC** | The Peacebuilding Commission is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports sustainable peace by (1) bringing together all relevant actors, including donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, and troop contributing countries, (2) marshalling resources, and (3) advising on and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.
- **PBF** | The Peacebuilding Fund supports activities, programs and organizations that seek to build a lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. It works through two mechanisms: the *Immediate Response Facility* is designed to jumpstart peacebuilding and recovery needs while the *Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility* supports more long-term processes.
- **PBSO** | The Peacebuilding Support Office was established to assist and support the PBC with strategic advice and policy guidance, administer the PBF and to serve the Secretary-General in coordinating United Nations agencies in their peacebuilding efforts.

Key Findings of “The Challenge of Sustaining Peace”

1. Peacebuilding is commonly understood as an activity undertaken only in post-conflict situations whereas it can in fact occur in all phases of the conflict cycle. The panel criticizes that **peacebuilding** is often treated as an **afterthought** and is consequently often **under-prioritized** and **under-resourced**.
2. The **UN system is fragmented at every level** – from the intergovernmental organs and the Secretariat to the field missions – into separate “silos” that each perform solely from the vantage point of their particular responsibilities.
3. Against the backdrop of a rising number of violent conflicts and their increasing complexity, fragmentation and intractability, the panel highlights the importance of a **comprehensive approach of sustaining peace** as it represents the core task of the UN.
4. Fostering “**inclusive national ownership**” is crucial for the success of a peace operation since neither a functioning nation state nor an inclusive system of governance can be taken as givens in post-conflict situations. The national responsibility of driving efforts to sustain peace must be broadly shared across all social groups and include a wide spectrum of political opinions. The inclusion of women and youth is of the utmost importance.
5. **Realistic timelines** must form the basis for UN peace operations as sustaining peace after a conflict presents a lengthy and costly challenge. Undue haste and narrow focus on cessation of hostilities rather than on addressing the root causes are significant factors for relapse.

Recommendations

1. **Promoting coherence at the intergovernmental level** | The PBC should undertake more of its work through its full membership and bridge the divide between the relevant intergovernmental organs like it was always intended to do.
2. **Improving the peacebuilding capability of the UN System** | Significant improvements to the UN's skills, knowledge, resources and approaches on the ground should be introduced.
3. **Partnering for sustaining peace** | Closer strategic and operational partnerships with international financial institutions and with regional and sub-regional organizations must be prioritized and deepened.
4. **More predictable financing, including the Peacebuilding Fund** | More predictable funding is a key requirement. Pooling funding between the UN, World Bank and other bilateral and multilateral financial institutions will maximize impact and share risk.
5. **Improving leadership and broadening inclusion** | Particular support should be focused on building national leadership and broadening inclusion with special attention to gender equality.
6. **Redefining peacebuilding and implementing the recommendations** | Peacebuilding is not merely a post-conflict activity. "Sustaining peace" must be the thread that runs through the complete cycle of UN engagement. A change in mind-set among member states is needed.

Linking the UN Reviews of Peacebuilding and of Peace Operations

The call for coherence has been made by both "The Challenge of Sustaining Peace" and the review of the *High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (HIPPO). The two reviews – as well as a third one – the "Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325" – cross-reference each other's work in their recommendations. Experts from all panels have met during the respective processes, and partially also engaged in joint discussions with other stakeholders. However, it has been pointed out that it was rather unfortunate to have three reviews on UN peace and security activities running in parallel without systematic links during the course of their analysis.

The General Assembly and the Next Secretary-General

With three substantial reviews published in 2015, the task ahead now is to align key findings and recommendations from all three and to put them into practice. This is far from an easy endeavor in the last year of a UN Secretary-General's term of office. Much work will remain for his successor in 2017.

Nevertheless, the UN General Assembly (GA) decided to dedicate a High-Level Thematic Debate during its 70th session on May 10-11, 2016 to "UN, Peace and Security." In that debate, the GA will look into all three reviews "to reflect on ways to further strengthen the UN's architecture in support of comprehensive, efficient and effective engagement in the field of peace and security." The debate will include interventions from member states, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society, the private sector, as well as global networks of non-state actors, think tanks and eminent experts. It will be preceded by a variety of regional seminars to enable the discussion of "concrete ways to advance a new commitment for a solid architecture in support of collective action in the field of peace and security."

Resources

- [PGA Announcement for the High-Level Thematic Debate on May 10-11, 2016](#)
- Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN PBA: ["The Challenge of Sustaining Peace"](#)
- Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations: ["Uniting Our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnerships and People"](#)
- Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: ["Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace"](#)
- [UN Peacebuilding Commission](#)
- [UN Peacebuilding Fund](#)
- [UN Peacebuilding Support Office](#)