



PBSO

The Peacebuilding Brief

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Security Council adopts historic resolution on Youth, Peace and Security following Global Forum in Jordan

by PBSO

Ms. Alaa Toutounji, a 27-year old young woman from Syria working on providing humanitarian support to displaced Syrians, was one of 200 young peacebuilders who joined the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in Amman, Jordan, this past August. Alaa and her peers from over 100 countries, the world, shared over the course of two intense days of immensely powerful testimonies of the peacebuilding work they carry out in their countries, often with little support, acknowledgement, funding or even basic security. They talked about their hopes for peace and the end of militaristic approaches, the role of young women for peace and security, the courage of young refugees and internally-displaced people, how young people are involved in countering violent extremism, as well as their involvement in governance in peacebuilding contexts. The Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, which was developed based on inputs from over 11,000 young people from around the world, was adopted at the Global Forum and called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution recognizing the work of young peacebuilders and calling on Member States to support them.

On 9 December 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted an historic resolution on youth, peace and



Security Council adopts historic resolution on youth, peace and security on 9 December 2015. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

security ([S/RES/2015/2250](#)), focusing for the first time on the positive role of young men and women play for building sustainable peace. The resolution was sponsored by Jordan, as a direct follow-up to the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, as well as the Open Debate in the Security Council in April 2015, which were both organized by Jordan. The resolution fulfills the commitment expressed by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II at the Global Forum that Jordan would use its seat at the Security Council to bring young people's voices to the Security Council.

The Security Council resolution reflects the shift that has taken place from seeing young men and women as victims or threats to recognizing the positive role that they play in sustaining peace. The resolution represents an unprecedented acknowledgment of the urgent need to engage young men and women in prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, reconciliation and countering violent extremism. The resolution urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels and to offer mechanisms, develop policies and provide increased political, financial, technical and logistical support to allow youth to participate meaningfully in peace processes and peacebuilding and prevent violence. It also calls on all parties to armed conflicts to protect civilians, including youth, involve youth in the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance and interreligious dialogue and encourage youth employment and invest in young people's capabilities, skills and entrepreneurship. The resolution also stresses the vital role of the Peacebuilding Commission in addressing the conditions leading to violent extremism, including by encouraging engagement with youth. Finally, it requests the Secretary-General to carry out a progress study on the youth's positive contribution to peace and to make the re-

sults of the study available to the Council and all Member States.

For the Peacebuilding Support Office, the resolution is a culmination of several years of work on youth and peacebuilding. PBSO undertook the overall coordination for the substantive preparation of the Forum, in close collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), UNFPA, UNDP, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).

The Peacebuilding Fund has allocated about 20 per cent of its funds to programmes fully or partly targeting young people since its creation in 2007, in most cases, for economic recovery and employment programmes, but also increasingly in recent years for supporting young people's participation and agency in rebuilding their communities.

“Do not underestimate the importance of our youth in Syria who are working tirelessly to build a future free of hate and violence. They deserve to be believed in [...]

I will not ask you to accomplish the monumental task of saving Syria. Instead, I will ask you to help its youth because they are the ones, the only ones, who can truly save Syria.”

-Ms. Alaa Toutounji, a 27 year-old peacebuilder from Syria

PBSO also helped found, in 2012, the Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, an inter-agency platform aimed at facilitating information-sharing and coor-

dination for the work of UN and civil society partners on youth and peacebuilding. The Working Group is co-chaired by PBSO, Search for Common Ground and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, and placed under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

This working group has been instrumental in rallying a great diversity of partner organizations around the theme of youth and peacebuilding. Because of the lack of a policy framework that could guide the work in this field, and because of the too-often simplistic portraying and stereotyping of young people (men in particular as a threat to stability and young women as helpless victims, the Group developed, through a consultative process involving key UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, etc.) and NGOs (Mercy Corps, Save the Children, the Girl Scouts of the USA, Women's Refugee Commission, World Vision, etc.), 9 overarching [Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#). These Principles, which were also noted in the Security Council resolution, were designed to enable participative, inclusive and inter-generational peacebuilding strategies and programmes that systematically promote and ensure participation and contributions of young people.

The Guiding Principles have been launched in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Tunisia and Yemen. They have been endorsed by the Commonwealth Youth Ministers in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and they have also been adopted as a guiding framework for the European Commission's [Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace](#).

The Working Group also identified a critical knowledge and operational gap for the field of youth and peacebuilding as there is no practical tool to help guide

Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding

1. *Promote young people's participation as an essential condition for successful peacebuilding.*
2. *Value and build upon young people's diversity and experiences.*
3. *Be sensitive to gender dynamics.*
4. *Enable young people's ownership, leadership and accountability in peacebuilding.*
5. *Do no harm.*
6. *Involve young people in all stages of peacebuilding and post-conflict programming.*
7. *Enhance the knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies of young people for peacebuilding.*
8. *Invest in inter-generational partnerships in young people's communities.*
9. *Introduce and support policies that address the full needs of young people.*

programmatic work on young people's participation in peacebuilding, based on a thorough analysis of effective approaches, good practices and lessons learned from the field. The Working Group, therefore, launched the development of a **Practice Note on Youth & Peacebuilding**, to accompany the Guiding Principles. The Practice Note, which will be finalized by the end of 2015, aims at informing policy makers and donors of key strategic and programming considerations for supporting young people's participation to peacebuilding, in order to enhance quality and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions. It provides broad programmatic and policy guidance on youth participation in peacebuilding, illustrated by examples of what works or not in a wide-ranging set of activities that currently take place, demonstrating the importance to invest in this innovative and promising field. The Practice Note covers key policy and programmatic areas related to the field of youth and peacebuilding, from national policies and youth voluntary services to youth centers, education, governance, extractive industries, countering violent extremism and the media.

All these efforts have contributed to the growing momentum on youth and peacebuilding issues. In his [speech](#) on the International Day of Peace in September of 2015, the Secretary-General called on "all governments to empower young people to contribute to peace" and reaffirmed his "support [to] the young people who want to build peace". There

have been over 43 million impressions and interactions of the hashtag **#youth4peace** since April 2015 – contributing to an online global conversation on the role of youth in peacebuilding, conflict transformation and countering violent extremism.

The Peacebuilding Commission held at the end of November a meeting on youth and peacebuilding, to discuss the Amman Youth Declaration and explore how the PBC can support both policy and programmatic efforts in this area. The Peacebuilding Fund is uniquely placed to support innovative programmes on youth and peacebuilding and contribute to an improved quality, scope and funding of youth and peacebuilding programming. The Peacebuilding Support Office intends to remain at the forefront of efforts to implement the Security Council resolution, raise awareness of youth and peacebuilding and help guide discussions at both policy and programmatic levels, in close collaboration with partners from civil society and the UN system. ●



Youth delegates read from the Amman Youth Declaration. PBSO photo/Henk-Jan Brinkman

Interview with H. E. Mr. Gert Rosenthal, chair of the Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre left) meets with members of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. From left: Mr. Charles Petrie (France), Major Gen. (Ret.) Anis Bajwa (Pakistan), Ms. Funmi Olonisakin (Nigeria), H.E. Ms. Edith Grace Ssemplala (Uganda), Ms. Saraswathi Menon (India), H.E. Mr. Gert Rosenthal (Guatemala) and H.E. Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (Mauritania). UN Photo/Mark Garten

Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Chair of the Advisory group of Experts (AGE) on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, was Foreign Minister of Guatemala (2006-2008) and Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations (1999-2004, 2008-2014). He was also the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (1988-1998). Mr. Henk-Jan Brinkman, Chief of the Policy, Planning and Application Branch of PBSO, interviewed Ambassador Rosenthal on 22 September 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York.

Ambassador Rosenthal submitted the [report](#) of the AGE on behalf of the Group to the Presidents of the Security Council and of the General Assembly on 29 June 2015, which concluded the first phase of the review. The second – intergovernmental – phase is being led by the Permanent Representatives of Angola and Australia to the United Nations, who have been appointed by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council as the Co-Facilitators. Various

informal discussions among Member States have been organized since the release of the report. In an informal briefing to the Member States on 6 October, the Co-Facilitators indicated that the desired outcome would be identical resolutions for consideration and action by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

What are the key findings of the AGE on the Peacebuilding Architecture?

The single most important finding of the AGE report is that there is a systemic problem within the UN system itself that results from the tensions that exist between the General Assembly and the Security Council. These tensions need to be addressed as a priority to strengthen the UN’s peacebuilding agenda rather than to focus on the operational challenges of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund.

What concept lies behind the title “The Challenge of Sustaining Peace”?

The title was a product of brainstorming. It reflects our intention to take issue with how peacebuilding is understood in this house. There is the idea that there is a sequence in responding to conflicts and that peacebuilding happens after the guns have stopped. But this is not necessarily true. The Security Council already recognized in 2001 that peacebuilding takes place in all parts of the conflict cycle: before, during and after conflict. In Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s original report “An Agenda for Peace”, the sequence is present, as he used the term “post-conflict peacebuilding”. But he also made a point just before leaving in 1995 that the sequence isn’t necessarily required. It is important to remind the Member States of this because peacebuilding, when limited to post-conflict situations, has inevitably been relegated to a peripheral part for far too long.

The report is quite comprehensive, what were the main challenges in putting it together?

It is difficult for me to acknowledge chal-

lenges because it was quite easy to get an agreement. We started our efforts with a brainstorming session in February, which showed that there was quite a lot of agreement among the seven members. After that, we prepared a conceptual framework. It was understood that we would build on this framework during each meeting and consult in-house both at the headquarters and especially in the field, which is where the real peacebuilding happens. There were different points of view, which was good and enriching for the final report. This is why putting it together wasn't all that challenging. However, implementing the recommendations will be much more difficult.

What do you foresee may be the biggest challenges ahead in implementing the recommendations contained in the report?

Let me go back to the original diagnosis, which is the fragmentation that exists inside the UN. Part of this fragmentation is the product of a mind-set of the Security Council. Especially the permanent members of the Security Council don't want the General Assembly to be involved with anything related to peace and security. They believe that the Security Council should be the only organ that deals with such issues. Essentially, this goes back to how you define conflicts and whether peacebuilding should really be seen as peripheral. The challenge, then, is to achieve a change in mind-set, where the principal organs can work together, each in their respective mandated fields of expertise. That is why we are proposing that the Peacebuilding Commission should be used to build a bridge between the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC in the areas that are pertinent to sustainable peace.

For many, the biggest weakness of the PBC, i.e., that it is not a main organ of the UN, is at the same time its biggest potential strength. By definition, the PBC

does not interfere with the work of other organs but it can act to bring them together.

How did the approach of undertaking the five case studies inform the AGE's analysis?

The case studies provided unique insights into questions that were relevant to peacebuilding in the field. We had one success story, Timor-Leste, two not so successful stories – the Central African Republic and South Sudan – and Burundi and Sierra Leone somewhere in-between, with the latter closer to a success story despite the Ebola crisis. These countries offered us a variety of circumstances that allowed us to look at how the UN implements peacebuilding in the field. In three of the countries, it became obvious that when a peace operation is withdrawn, the Security Council rapidly gives the [UN] Country Team responsibilities, but without giving it the required resources needed to implement its mandate. As a result, the UN presence practically collapses.

“..there is a systemic problem within the UN system itself that results from the tensions that exist between the General Assembly and the Security Council.”

What motivated you to agree to undertake this endeavour?

Mostly circumstance. I left the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the UN quite recently and I had experience in working with the PBC given that Guatemala had the PBC's Vice-Presidency in 2011. I first hesitated a little bit, but then I thought it could be interesting particularly because it was a small group. It is much easier to build common ground in smaller teams and the size of team

mattered a lot to me. Seven people [for the Advisory Group] was perfect. It was a great experience professionally. I also enjoyed it personally even if it was only for a period of six months.

We understand that you went to Sierra Leone, which is currently on the PBC agenda. The AGE found this case to be an example of a successful transition to peace. Tell us about what you experienced there.

I was genuinely impressed. Everything in Sierra Leone was dominated by the extremely traumatizing experience of the Ebola crisis. We met a very committed [UN] Country Team and Government. There is a section in the report which draws on some of the elements of the relative success in Sierra Leone. One could argue that if the Ebola crisis had not struck the country, it would have progressed much further in terms of development today.

Tell us about your experience in Addis Ababa. You went to the African Union while you were there, right?

In Addis, we got together at the final stage of the report. We spent a lot of time brainstorming and took the opportunity to spend a day with the East African Community and the African Union. My impression was that the cooperation between the UN and the AU has progressed a lot more in peacekeeping than in peacebuilding. I think there are possibilities to enhance the cooperation with the AU and other regional organizations. The AU convened a meeting of the Peace and Security Council when we were there. Most of the members said positive things or underlined that they were open for more cooperation. But I got the impression that while they were using the word peacebuilding, they were really thinking of peacekeeping.

Many people say that 2015 is a “year of

reviews.” Why is it important to take stock of United Nations responses now? How does this review relate to other comprehensive reviews?

There is obviously a close link to the [peace operations report](#),¹ which was launched by the Secretary-General, even though the logic and timing are different. I believe it is part of his legacy. Peace-keeping has become quite contentious.

We have lost a lot of peacekeepers recently. Thus, there is an objective reason for this review. If you take an X-ray of the peacekeeping operations before the Brahimi Report and after, there have been a lot of changes. It is important to review these engagements, particularly regarding the use of force. Peacekeepers such as those present in Mali, are increasingly mandated to enforce peace. As a troop contributing country, we (Guatemala) always had doubts about this. It seems opportune to revisit these operations now.

When the PBC was first created in 2005, the founders already acknowledged that they would review its work in 2010. The review was indeed undertaken, but the Member States only took note of its findings and recommendations. The Security Council and the General Assembly asked to have a full review in 2015, which explains why there are two reviews. We tried to coordinate as much as we could with the peace operations review panel. It is not an accident that in the final reports there are large areas of common ground. The challenge of the facilitators will be to link the two reports.

Do you have any other comments on the reviews?

We included a link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) about which I’m pretty excited about. When I was still

in the Guatemalan Mission, we fought hard to have peace and security reflected in the SDG report. People don’t just want material improvement and welfare. Above all, they want peace and security. All of our surveys reflect this. We start our report and we end it with citing the SDGs. Climate change is also important but it’s not our main focus. Other reviews are pretty topic-specific. In fact, we were fortunate enough to have one member of our group who was also a member of the 1325 review.² This is an important year. We have the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, there will be a change in leadership, and there are four to five major agendas in the areas such as development, peace and security and humanitarian affairs. I would like to say human rights as well but that seems less clear. It has been an interesting year.

What do you see for the future of PBSO?

We would like to see the PBSO strengthened in the future. In particular, we would like to see a stronger policy and planning unit within the office. We would welcome it if the PBSO had more resources available. We are not talking about a dramatic up-scale of resources or staff but we think that it should be strengthened in light of a greater request

to sustain peace. The original resolution that established the PBSO in 2005 deliberately talked about a small office. This reflected the mood that existed at that time. Hopefully the recommendations of the AGE report will find some responses among Member States.

Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

You haven’t touched on the PBF, which is the only entity that is not criticized in the report. Most people think it has done a pretty good job, but it will be important to give it some stable resources. The Fund could easily reach more people if it had a reliable source of funding to invest in conflict prevention, which is what the PBF is all about. The PBF is one of the few bodies in the house that talks the same language as the World Bank. In fact, they have a comfortable dialogue with the World Bank. That is another aspect about the Fund that nobody mentions, but which is immensely important. Here lies one of the keys to improve peacebuilding on a sustainable basis. It’s not a dramatic improvement but a qualitative importance. ●

<i>as of 21 December 2015</i>	
Updated timeline for Intergovernmental phase of the 2015 Review of the U.N. Peacebuilding Architecture	
September 2015	Informal discussions on the initial reactions to the AGE Report
6 October 2015	Informal meeting on ‘Setting the Stage’
October – December 2015	Meetings with PBC Caucuses and Regional Groupings
13 November 2015	Open informal consultations organized by Co-Facilitators
December 2015	Presentation of ‘Zero Draft’ of proposed parallel resolutions
First quarter, 2016	Continuation of intergovernmental process, anticipated to conclude by end of March

¹ Report of the High-Level Panel on Peace Operations.

² The UN Secretary-General has commissioned a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The study will highlight examples of good practice, implementation gaps and challenges, and priorities for action.

Breathing Peace after Decades of Conflict in Colombia

by PBSO

After more than 50 years of intense and multifaceted internal conflict, Colombians are understandably skeptical when it comes to talk of peace. National surveys routinely show that while most Colombians express a desire for peace, a large number of citizens are distrustful that negotiations will yield agreements that will be fair and respected. Colombia, however, is at an historic crossroad, with perhaps its best chance for peace in decades within its grasp. As political interests pull in different directions, causing momentum for an agreement to ebb and flow, the role of average Colombians in support of peace is critical. It was against this backdrop that the Peacebuilding Fund was approached in mid-2014 to support a mass public awareness campaign aimed at encouraging Colombian citizens to take the initiative to practice peace in their own lives and communities.

The project, “*Respira Paz*” (Breath Peace), is a joint effort of UNICEF and UNDP – with support from the whole UN system in Colombia – and funded by the Government of Colombia, the Norwegian Embassy and the Peacebuilding Fund. The project, implemented throughout 2014 and into the first half of 2015, kicked off with a mass rally in central Bogotá in mid-2014. Over the following year, the campaign reached millions through television and radio spots by celebrities, a five-episode radio drama aired on 107 radio stations throughout the country and a mobile cinema that brought the critically acclaimed feature film “Mateo” to remote, conflict-affected communities as a means to trigger conversations around individuals’ choices and their impact on peace. The mobile cinemas were paired with outreach activities that specifically targeted women and youth in 153 municipalities, sup-

porting more than 25,000 people to proactively promote peace in their neighborhoods. In the conflict-affected department of Meta, the Governor enthusiastically embraced *Respira Paz*, noting its important role in reversing decades of conflict and pain that left the department’s population unable to imagine a peaceful life.

Early indications are that the project has contributed to a perceptible shift in public opinion, and PBSO eagerly awaits the conclusions of an independent evaluation scheduled for the end of 2015 to determine whether *Respira Paz* has made a sustained difference.

Recent advances by negotiators in Havana signal that a peace agreement may

be around the corner. If signed, the agreement will be put to the Colombian people through a referendum. At that point, the hard work of *implementing* the agreement will begin in earnest. Its success will require the sustained support of a broad base of Colombian society to limit the impact of would-be spoilers, provide ex-combatants with alternatives to violence and instill hope for a more prosperous and just future through tangible and immediate improvements in the lives of conflict-affected communities. Having helped to lay the groundwork for mass support through the *Respira Paz* campaign, PBSO looks forward to seeing how it may accompany Colombia as it takes further tenuous steps toward peace. ●



Photo courtesy of ONU Colombia.

The Way to Peace in Sierra Leone: A Chair's Perspective

by H.E. Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, former Chair of the PBC Sierra Leone Configuration

Had anyone suggested 15 years ago that Sierra Leone might one day be seen as a model for peacebuilding, they would have been dismissed as being hopelessly optimistic. The shocking brutality of the country's civil war seemed beyond comprehension, and yet...15 years on, Sierra Leone has proven that peacebuilding and peace consolidation is possible. I am pleased and proud to say that the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has accompanied Sierra Leone through this process and that it continues to be a partner in the consolidation of peace.

"Sierra Leone has come a long way because of that willingness to put conflict behind it and work towards a peaceful future."

Canada has chaired the Sierra Leone Country-Specific Configuration of the PBC since 2009, and my colleagues and I have had the privilege of observing just how fiercely – just how sincerely – the people and the political establishment of Sierra Leone have embraced the challenges of peace consolidation. In doing so, we have also drawn some lessons that may help to explain how Sierra Leone has come this far, and what it will take to continue this progress.

The one necessary condition for ensuring that peace is durable is the will of people and their leaders to truly *make* peace. For peace is not a given or, arguably, a natural state of being; certainly, when peace has been violently ruptured, it is not automatic that it returns once proximate causes of conflict have been addressed. Rather, peace is an ongoing project, an effort, a sometimes-fragile condition to be fostered. Sierra Leone has shown how this can be done. Its Government and political opposition, its

civil society – and here we must acknowledge especially the women who are so key to civil society's strength and innovation – and its people have all worked tirelessly to overcome that terrible decade of civil war. Without this, all of the international assistance in the world would, at best, postpone a return to violence.

Arguably the most important way in which the PBC has supported Sierra Leone in the post-conflict years came in 2009 when it aligned its priorities with those of the Government, as articulated

the PBC's roles of accompaniment and advocacy are so important. The establishment and consolidation of peace cannot be the work of any one organization – it must be a collective effort, and an on-going one. The PBC has stood at the centre of international efforts to provide all necessary support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, acting as a key interlocutor and as an advocate for Sierra Leone with partners such as the International Financial Institutions, donor partners and the UN system.

The 2012 elections were an indication of the distance the country had come on its journey. This is not to say that the original causes of conflict have simply disappeared. Serious challenges were (and are) still evident. One of the PBC's contributions to the consolidation of peace is, in fact, to follow a country's progress – or lack thereof – on a range of issues. There is no simple path to peace; rather, there is a dynamic, iterative process. The PBC's ability to both help identify and clarify problems and, through its advisory role, help direct resources toward addressing those problems is central to the accompaniment process. Thus, the Peacebuilding Assessment Mission of 2012 was able to identify 5 outstanding hurdles to overcoming in building peace in Sierra Leone, including the need to: develop national mechanisms and capacities for conflict prevention; support the constitutional review process; support and reform the security sector; address youth unemployment; and manage natural resources and land ownership. This range of needs underlines the complexity of peace and why a multi-pronged approach is necessary for its consolidation.

An extremely important part of this effort – particularly where there has been such a terrible conflict – is address-



H.E. Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, former Permanent Representative of Canada, former Chair of the PBC Sierra Leone Configuration. Photo courtesy of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN

in the Agenda for Change. Addressing issues such as good governance, gender equality, social protection and the economy was identified as key to consolidating peace. A vital element of international accompaniment has been to get behind Sierra Leone in its efforts to grapple with this complex array of issues.

This very complexity is one reason why

ing questions of justice and accountability as key elements in ensuring that peace takes root. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was a pioneering effort in that it both addressed the most serious crimes of the civil war *in country* and carried out an outreach programme. Justice was both done and seen to be done, and this emphasis on a very public process was key to its success. The Residual Special Court also deserves mention with regard to holding perpetrators of terrible crimes to account. Equally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was vital in helping Sierra Leoneans face the transgressions of the civil war, a key aspect of a durable peace. There is always a balance to be struck between attaining peace and obtaining justice; whatever the balance in any given context, it is central to the process.

Even with the progress Sierra Leone had made, even with peacebuilding challenges having been identified, things do not always go according to plan. In 2014, as I was finishing up a Chair's visit to Sierra Leone, the World Health Organization was on the verge of reporting a major outbreak of Ebola in neighbouring Guinea. As we all know, the virus went on to deliver a terrible blow to the progress of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In short order, all three countries experienced the shock of thousands of deaths, with all the social and economic ramifications which, sadly, became front page news for many months.

Far from being simply a medical emergency – and it was surely that – Ebola strained every aspect of Sierra Leonean society, rolling back advances in a dramatic fashion. The economic consequences were far-reaching, faith in public institutions was undermined, there were difficult new roles for the security services and the social fabric was severely weakened. In the face of this – and in the face of the broader regional crisis – the international community's response

was mixed. In the end, there was an admirable degree of outreach and cooperation, but one must acknowledge that the initial response was not what it should have been.

“The establishment and consolidation of peace cannot be the work of any one organization – it must be a collective effort, and an ongoing one.”

In these circumstances, the PBC was able to play a valuable role in drawing other actors' attention to the peace and security aspects of the crisis. Our long-term engagement and focus on the reinforcement of peace gave the PBC an ideal vantage point from which to advocate for each of the affected countries. It is such a role that the PBC country-specific configurations might be best placed to play in the future. Whether it be an epidemic, a natural disaster, a secondary conflict or some other disruption, there will always be difficulties – sometimes predictable, but often unforeseeable – in the efforts to build a lasting peace. A focused group of interested, engaged

countries can be a key ally, both to help foresee and prepare for upcoming challenges and to provide less-closely engaged actors guidance on how to apply their particular expertise in the given context. A nimble group of friends with a light touch – that's how I would like to see the PBC country-specific configurations evolve.

Ultimately, of course, such friends have to listen to those most directly affected by events in a country – the people and their leaders. This brings me back to my first point about the importance of Sierra Leone truly wanting peace and being willing to work to entrench the foundations of peace and then to build upon them. Sierra Leone has come a long way because of that willingness to put conflict behind it and work towards a peaceful future. The accompaniment of this process by the PBC and others, travelling that distance alongside the people of Sierra Leone, was a crucial complement to this. Canada has tried to play that role as Chair of the Country-Specific Configuration, as did the Netherlands before us; equally, important donors such as the UK have been critical to supporting the process. There remains a long way to go but, together, we shall make it happen. ●



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) with Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, at the ceremony marking the closure of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Mission in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), and the transfer of its responsibilities to the UN country team, 5 March 2014. UN photo/Eskinder Debebe

An interview with Mr. Brian Williams, former chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO

Mr. Brian Williams was chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO since 2010. In December 2015, he assumed his new position as Resident Coordinator in Albania. Mr. Jago Salmon, the United Nations-World Bank Partnership Advisor, hosted by PBSO, interviewed Mr. Williams in November 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York.

What sparked your interest in peacebuilding?

The first 10 years or so of my career, I was involved in humanitarian assistance in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Great Lakes region of Africa, surrounding the crisis of the Rwandan genocide. At some point, it became frustrating to work on humanitarian impacts and not on root causes. So in Rwanda and Burundi, I got involved in what we called at the time post-conflict reconstruction, but which I think today we would call peacebuilding, and it was formative in how I see peacebuilding today. In particular it was trying to find ways to be more inclusive of populations in decisions about their own development – this is the connection between development work and the political sphere. Then I spent eight years in public health. I worked for UNAIDS both in the headquarters in Geneva and as their Country Coordinator in Myanmar for four years, which was another rich experience. Public health practitioners have a whole range of sophisticated, sociological tools to track how behaviours of individuals and of institutions change. Peacebuilding should employ more of these techniques to understand populations' views on how their relationship to the state is changing; how their views about their relationships to other people are changing; how behaviours of state institutions are changing; and how politi-



Mr. Brian Williams (left), former Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO, meets with Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support. PBSO photo/Kaori Minami

cal processes are changing. There is no excuse for not doing more research and better design work in this area, we simply need to make it happen. Although of course the capacity constraints in many countries are very significant, the contexts on the ground are often complicated and difficult. In 2009, when we were living in Côte d'Ivoire, I was alerted to this new outfit I'd never heard of before called the Peacebuilding Fund and I applied for the job.

Do you feel you are closer to the root causes now?

Whether we call it conflict prevention, peacebuilding or sustaining peace, the movement consistently over the last 15 years has been in the direction of better

and more explicitly understanding of social and political tensions in societies that might enable violent conflict to erupt. We are talking about the rules of the game by which members of a society, all of them, participate in processes that allow them to agree on how to develop their country, their nation and their community. We are doing a much better job of that than before.

I have been very happy in the Peacebuilding Support Office because it is a bit of the UN that is entirely focused on those connections between development and the political nature of the decision-making about priorities. It's a great strength of the Peacebuilding Fund that we can act quickly and the decision making can be quite light.

We are building up some Design, Monitoring and Evaluation capacity in New York so that we can accompany and help countries that are under a lot of pressure to design projects quickly.

In the Central African Republic, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Babacar Gaye was very concerned about acting quickly after the transitional Government was installed in January 2014. In some of the earlier days of the Government, there was a lot of concern that it would simply collapse. So we partnered with the World Bank to provide salaries for four months to the police and the gendarmerie. On one level, this is simply good, conflict-sensitive programme management: for teacher and the healthcare workers to receive salaries but to not pay the police and the gendarmerie could have aggravated violent conflict. And on another level, by supporting in such a direct fashion the salaries of a core service, we also helped establish the UN as a committed partner with a long-term view on how to professionalize the forces.

How has your view on peacebuilding impacted your work as the Chief of Financing for Peacebuilding?

My view on the Secretary-General's fund is that if a political authority in a country is asking for assistance to work on what we know are difficult issues around peacebuilding, for example, dealing with security sector reform, the fairness of political processes, the independence of the judiciary, discrimination against or exclusion of whole communities, reconciliation issues, past accountability issues on human rights or transitional justice, we should support it. If a political authority is willing to tackle tough peacebuilding issues, then I believe United Nations should stand ready to assist them and accompany them in that process.

For example, Niger has not gone through

a broad deep civil war that is deeply traumatic. It has gone through a political crisis and is in a neighbourhood that has regional dynamics fuelling violence, for example, with Boko Haram on their southern border. But in this case, the Government of Niger has itself created a high authority for peacebuilding, La Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix, and they have asked for the UN's support so we are working with them.

In Guinea, President Condé, when he won his first election, was very interested in demonstrating that as a country they were going to manage the military in a more democratic fashion. One of the ways he wanted to demonstrate this was by retiring a number of military officers and showing that the military was managed like any other government institu-

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tion. He wanted that those who were to be retired received a small incentive, a small bonus to set an example. The Department of Political Affairs through the United Nations Office for West Africa – Special Representative of the Secretary-General Said Djinnit at that time – was very supportive of this step. This is an example of a project that is right in line with what the [World Bank's] World Development Report 2011 would refer to as a “commitment mechanism.” President Condé made a commitment to move, publicly declaring on TV that this was going to happen and that the United Nations was supporting him in this effort. This is the kind of thing that the Peacebuilding Fund is really well placed to do because we have more political backing.

In Somalia, we are working hard with UNSOM to support the state as it re-establishes itself in rural areas, in areas that were formerly connected to Al-Shabaab. This is tremendously difficult, but there is an effort to build trust and cohesion between local authorities and the representatives of the Federal Government of Somalia. It is programmatically risky and also expensive because of the measures that need to be taken to mitigate against security risks. The Peacebuilding Fund is able to take these risks because of our position in the Secretariat.

At every step we are working in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs and UNSOM, the special political mission, UNDP and other members of the UN Country Team that are involved on the ground. Also in Somalia, we have already set up the mechanisms to channel funds directly through the government which is managing an aid coordination and a programming prioritization governance process that is based on the New Deal [for Engagement in Fragile States]. The government is managing it directly; that's what is critical. We are using that same government-led management structure to both identify programme areas for our gaps and to provide some resources directly through the government treasury.

Unfortunately, for us, it's hard to raise money these days – not only globally, but also at the country level. One innovation we have tried is to provide explicit matching funds [in DRC], in order to incentivize increased support through pooled funding mechanisms. The PBF initially invested US\$8 million in a trust fund and then offered that for every US\$3 million that donors added, the PBF would commit an additional million. Another US\$12 million was raised in this way.

What do you wish the UN's Peacebuild-

ing efforts had been able to resolve in the past 6 years? What do you regret?

Burundi in particular is a cause for great concern. It's not that a single election event equals peacebuilding, but if a country chooses to be democratic then the electoral process is fundamental to how political power is managed. I think Burundi is a tragic example of how, despite tremendous progress over the last 10 years, the management of political power has followed a path that is putting all those gains at risk.

Looking forward, where do you see the PBF in 10 years?

I believe the UN has great untapped potential to accompany countries in their pursuit of politically peaceful development. The Peacebuilding Fund helps incentivize the best that the UN can be. It encourages better strategies based on more analysis. Because it has resources to invest, it catalyses UN missions and UN agencies, funds and programmes to work together. But it lacks the scale to achieve greater impact in the often very short windows of opportunity that are available. In Central African Republic today we are investing in community violence reduction programmes that we think might reach 10 percent of the anti-Balaka communities. We should not be fooling around – this is not the time for pilot projects. There are many spoilers out there who would like to see us fail. Significant risk-tolerant capital would allow us to support programmes go to scale more quickly. It would also enable the PBF to have more impact in some of the bigger crises, where the scale of resources we currently have are largely insufficient to incentivize changed behaviour.

I hope our stakeholders read the [report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the] Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and follow-up by voting with their limited tax

-payer dollars to invest in peacebuilding. For example, as wonderfully generous as many European nations are in terms of welcoming refugees, it is short-sighted – and certainly more expensive – to shift funding from prevention to crisis response. The Secretary-General's Advisory Group [of the PBF] is frankly shocked that despite positive review after positive review of the PBF, we are struggling to raise even our target of US\$100 million

per year. In ten years, I hope the wisdom of investing in conflict prevention will have won over the hearts and pocket-books of world leaders, and as a result our children will have a more peaceful and safer world when it is their turn to be its custodians. ●

New decisions of the Peacebuilding Fund in 2015

- On 4 December, the PBF approved for the first time a cross-border project, which seeks to bolster conflict prevention efforts along the **Kyrgyz-Tajik border**. The project will engage local authorities, including elected officials and security actors, to promote early warning and early response mechanisms and reduce tensions around competition for natural resources.
- The PBF contributed an additional US\$4 million for **eastern DRC** in support of stabilization priorities, triggered by commitments from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to the newly formed DRC Stabilization Coherence Trust Fund. This latest allocation results from PBF's pledge to match other contributions, based on a 1:3 ratio, to incentivize investment in the Trust Fund.
- On 4 December 2015, PBSO approved the Peacebuilding Priority Plan for **Madagascar** for US\$11.5 million. The Priority Plan provides strategic direction to peacebuilding efforts, under the overall vision of contributing to national reconciliation. Specifically, the Plan focuses on three outcomes, including: (i) strengthening the rule of law and good governance, including through the fight against corruption; (ii) contributing to the reform of the security sector; and (iii) providing holistic support to the stabilization of southern Madagascar.
- The PBF also approved a US\$10 million programme in **Niger** in support of a Peacebuilding Priority Plan. The Plan is based on a recent participatory conflict analysis, conducted in cooperation with **PeaceNexus, DPA and UNDP** and focuses on socio-economic opportunities for vulnerable youth; support to national dialogue; conflict prevention around natural resources; and reinforcement of security in the border regions.
- In November 2015, the Secretary-General declared **Sri Lanka** eligible to receive funds from the Peacebuilding Fund. Given the Fund's new policy, eligibility will be subject to review after 5 years. **Sri Lanka** will be encouraged to participate in a meeting of the **Peacebuilding Commission** to discuss its vision over the next five years.