



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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**The United Nations “Peacebuilding Architecture”:  
Past, Present and Future**

**Sarah Hearn, Alejandra Kubitschek Bujones, Alischa Kugel**

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

## CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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## The United Nations “Peacebuilding Architecture”: Past, Present and Future

Sarah Hearn, Alejandra Kubitschek Bujones, Alischa Kugel<sup>i</sup>

*[.....] 2015 is an opportunity to shape the kind of Peacebuilding Commission that will be relevant, catalytic and effective, not least from the perspective of the Security Council and, of course, the interests of those States that are affected.<sup>1</sup>*

Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, March 2014,  
Security Council debate on peacebuilding

### Introduction

There is a broad agreement that the United Nations’ “Peacebuilding Architecture” (PBA) has failed to live up to the high hopes that existed when the 2005 World Summit agreed to establish the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its related entities, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

This short paper explores why this is the case, and the options currently on the table to revitalize the PBA. In this context, we briefly review the initial logic and expectations of the PBA, and sketch out the factors that have affected the PBA’s impact both positively and negatively. We then assess the state of the debate, the options, and the political capital and pathways leading into a planned 2015 review of the PBA by the General Assembly and the Security Council.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to understand the PBA in the context of the evolution and expansion of wider UN peacebuilding efforts, and further detail on the existing relationships with UN peace operations is also outlined in the Annex. There is a wider debate on whether and how to review the current construct and future of the UN peace and security system, extending far beyond the PBA. Given appointment cycles, it would be logical for such a review to be guided and implemented by the next Secretary-General. The planned

i. Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank Richard Gowan CIC, representatives of the Peacebuilding Commission, countries on the agenda of the Commission, the Security Council and United Nations offices, and Achim Wennmann, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, for their insightful contributions and feedback in the production of this paper.

2015 review of the PBA is out of synch with these cycles, but it does offer an opportunity for participants in the process to contribute to the debate. Therefore, this paper confines itself to analyzing the PBA and some of the ways the UN might make the best use of a review in 2015.

We conducted a New-York based survey of the available literature and perspectives among sample stakeholders in the Peacebuilding Commission, Security Council and the UN organization. We have done so because the PBA is a set of New York-based entities, which will either succeed or fail on the institutions’ ability to craft roles in that context.

The ambition for this paper is simply to stretch and challenge countries’ and UN thinking on ambition for the 2015 review of the PBA. If we take as a starting point that no country or UN department wants to continue “business as usual,” we aim to put the key issues and considerations on the table to hopefully inform a constructive debate on the scope and ambition for countries entering debate on the 2015 review. The purpose of doing so is to encourage a debate on the logic upon which the PBC and PBSO currently operate, and to facilitate finding a pathway that ultimately helps bring closure to the circular discourse that has emerged on the “value-added” of the PBA.

### The Original Logic and Expectations of the Peacebuilding Architecture

During the 1990s, an increase in intra-state conflicts generated a growth in focus by the international community on peacebuilding. A sequential approach to the transition from war to peace that had characterized inter-state conflicts did not hold in the complex civil conflicts after the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> Such conflicts did not tend to end in a decisive military victory and post-conflict reconstruction phase, but rather countries were fragile, trapped in cyclical cycles of conflict, with complex causes that repeatedly risked violence flaring as states formed. As international understanding of the links between political, security and development processes underpinning state formation and conflict grew, the UN and other actors started to develop peacebuilding as a field in its own right.

The concept of peacebuilding was first introduced at the UN by Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace in 1992.<sup>4</sup> The document defined peacebuilding as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict." Initially conceived as part of a conflict sequence from preventive diplomacy through to peacemaking and peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding, the UN developed the peacebuilding concept further in the 2000 "Brahimi Report"<sup>5</sup> and the 2004 report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change,<sup>6</sup> to encapsulate a cyclical view of the causes of conflict and relapse and responses to addressing them.

These analytical reports identified a series of deep challenges within the UN system in effectively carrying out peacebuilding efforts. In many instances, UN and member state capacity and focus had been dispersed, which had resulted in gaps, duplication of efforts and missed opportunities to support national peacebuilding processes.<sup>7</sup> In particular:

- the UN had struggled to identify and deploy staff with expertise in a timely manner;
- peacebuilding efforts between UN peacekeeping operations and political missions and the UN development system were siloed, dispersed and poorly coordinated;
- a body of best practices and policies on peacebuilding was needed for the whole UN system;
- the UN lacked rapid funds that could respond to peacebuilding crises, opportunities and gaps as they emerged; and
- the international system as a whole – institutions, traditional donors and emerging powers – lacked coherence on the ground.

By the time of the 2005 World Summit, there was widespread recognition of the need for new institutions that would strengthen strategic coherence in addressing the needs of a range of countries affected by violent

conflict, and that would help to bridge the gap between international political, security and development efforts.<sup>8</sup> This consensus led to the adoption of the PBA at the World Summit in 2005.

The original logic of the PBA was to build synergies and coherence of the UN's (institutional and member-state) peacebuilding efforts; it was not intended as a new operational arm or set of self-standing entities. Many argued then and now that the PBA includes not only the PBC, PBSO and PBF, but the full spectrum of UN institutions, tools and member states, to which the PBC, PBSO and PBF should bring greater coherence.

Specifically, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established "to identify countries which are under stress and risk sliding towards State collapse; to organize, 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 the efforts of the international community in post-conflict peacebuilding over whatever period may be necessary." The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document,<sup>9</sup> listed the PBC's core peacebuilding functions as to:

- promote coordination and coherence,
- support resource mobilization,
- facilitate peacebuilding strategy,
- serve as a knowledge hub; and
- to conduct advocacy for peacebuilding and for countries' needs.

Alongside the PBC, a multi-donor Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was created to fill gaps and catalyze longer-term funding, and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) was entrusted with administering the PBF, advising the PBC and coordinating peacebuilding strategy and policy learning within the UN.<sup>10</sup>

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## Factors that Positively and Negatively Shaped the Impact of the PBA

The initial strategic concept for the PBA began to unravel during the early negotiations on the founding resolutions. Parallel attempts to reform the Security Council's permanent membership in 2005 had failed, and the PBC quickly became a safety valve for discontent. The bargains upon the founding of the PBA reflected these tensions. While officially serving as an advisory body to the Security Council and General Assembly, it had no independent authority or decision making power over other bodies.<sup>11</sup> Regardless, some member-states, mostly of the South, perceived the PBC as a potential opportunity to influence the Security Council and to recalibrate inequities in global governance.<sup>12</sup> Permanent members of the Council on the other hand were uncomfortable with this potential "encroachment" into peace and security policy, at least in geopolitically charged contexts.

As a result, whilst the PBC had originally been intended to provide an agile platform where all actors engaged in peacebuilding in a given context could discuss and agree upon a common strategy and priorities, during the negotiations, the PBC membership became significantly more fixed and formulaic. Eventually, the formula for the core membership of the PBC's "Organizational Committee" was composed of 31 members, drawn from seven countries from the Security Council, including the P5, seven from the General Assembly, seven from the Economic and Social Council, five from the top-ten UN troop contributors and five of the UN's top-ten financial donors. In parallel, it was decided that each country to join "the PBC's agenda" was to have a unique formal grouping and the "Country-Specific Configuration" (CSC) was invented. The CSC was drawn from the PBC's membership, the country itself, international organizations, neighboring states, and key bilateral partners.<sup>13</sup> An even wider range of countries have joined the CSCs – today around 50+ members can be found in a CSC whether or not they offer capital or a presence on the ground in a country undergoing a process of peacebuilding.

The PBC and PBSO's intended strategic role was diluted early on. While the mandate envisaged in the 2005 World Summit outcome document placed international strategy at the forefront, the PBC's founding resolutions negotiated through the General Assembly crafted a diplomatic body charged with raising awareness of a country's peacebuilding priorities and needs; with mobilizing resources; and with promoting coherence; but not with international strategy.<sup>14</sup> Inclusion of a country on the PBC's agenda would be largely driven by the Security Council. Initially, PBSO was to provide strategic input alongside the national governments seeking assistance, but this mandate quickly unraveled as some countries and UN departments pushed back on a leadership role for the new office, a point from which PBSO has not recovered. In addition, the founding resolutions of the PBC required it to operate by consensus of its 31 members (double the Security Council), which curbed decision-making.

The Center on International Cooperation first reviewed the PBA in 2008. In the PBA's first year in 2006, we found that the PBC's immediate procedural and negotiation obstacles had resulted in long delays, frustration, and confusion in the field and at headquarters about what the PBC was for.<sup>15</sup> Cumbersome negotiations had already resulted in the development of an institution that was considerably larger than first envisioned, but with no institutional weight, resources or other tools to assert itself.<sup>16</sup> By the end of its first year, a degree of self-fulfilling skepticism about whether the PBC could fulfill its mandate effectively or efficiently had already started to set in.<sup>17</sup>

Within the first year of establishment, Burundi and Sierra Leone (2006) joined the agenda of the PBC, followed by Guinea-Bissau (2007), the Central African Republic (2008), Liberia (2010), and lastly Guinea (2011).

From the early days, the PBC did have some successes. When Dan Smith (2013) analyzed evidence for the UN of the impact of the PBC, he found evidence even of early wins in the first countries to join the PBC – Burundi and Sierra Leone. In Burundi, the PBC had enabled bilateral donors and multilateral agencies to discuss and coordinate peacebuilding assistance with the government. The PBC was credited with aiding and mobilizing development

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aid for Burundi. A donor conference led by the CSC chair in Bujumbura in March 2007 pledged over \$680 million dollars, which was more than expected and can partly be seen as a consequence of the PBC's advocacy efforts.<sup>18</sup> In Sierra Leone, a study by IPI (2009) 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 the country. ERSG Von der Schulenburg had leveraged the PBC to provide the political support that he needed to exercise his role as coordinator of the UN on the ground. This helped foster political support for a more coherent in-country approach.<sup>19</sup>

In parallel, the UN's peacebuilding efforts in the field continued to expand. The UN development system and both types of UN crisis management operations – military peacekeeping operations and civilian led special political missions – directly contribute to peacebuilding. Over the past two decades, peacekeeping operations evolved from carrying out primarily military tasks to include multidimensional mandates involving a broad range of peacebuilding tasks. Of the 15 peacekeeping operations currently in the field, 9 are mandated by the Security Council to carry out multidimensional mandates. At the headquarters level, the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Field Support (DFS) work with PBSO as well as other partners “to ensure appropriate planning, execution, resourcing and staffing of peacebuilding aspects” of peacekeeping operations.<sup>20</sup> Political missions, run by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), have also expanded over the years, many working with the PBA. UN peacebuilding offices in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and the Central African Republic (CAR) have focused on harmonizing efforts of the UN development, peace and security arms to support comprehensive peacebuilding strategies.

Peacebuilding processes are at different stages in each of the countries on the PBC's agenda and the experience of coordination between peace operations and the Commission is varied. In Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia combined engagement appears to have contributed to consolidating peace in those countries, while the situations in Guinea-Bissau and the CAR have deteriorated,

in the latter case necessitating the replacement of the UN peacebuilding office with a military peacekeeping operation mandated to protect civilians and to establish security.

The reasons for the success or failure in the various countries are wide-ranging and beyond the scope of this short overview. Reviews of the PBC have shown that engagement between, and impact of, peace operations and the PBC is most effective when there is a close working relationship between the head of a UN mission and the Chair of a PBC County Configuration,<sup>21</sup> making the best use of the PBC's ability to advocate, to convene actors and to provide a diplomatic platform for the countries concerned.

The evidence suggested that a body like the PBC, with smart engagement from national governments and UN leaders on the ground, could draw together a broad range of actors, including the UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and in some cases civil society and political parties, to encourage coordination and coherence, add support to existing national resource mobilization efforts, and provide a diplomatic platform for countries to advocate for themselves.<sup>22</sup> Recent success in mobilizing a new round of peacebuilding commitments alongside the World Bank and other institutional and bilateral donors for Burundi (2013), and in Sierra Leone's desire to remain on the agenda of the PBC in the near term even as it successfully graduated from the Council's agenda (2014), lend support to this view.

However, the model of PBC impact that has emerged also reveals that the success of the PBC relies upon the goodwill and personal commitment of the Chair of the CSC, a collaborative partner on the ground in the UN and a collaborative host government. What has not emerged is a more institutionalized way of working between the PBC, the UN's institutions and wide range of countries undergoing peacebuilding processes.

These strategic weaknesses were brought to the fore when peacebuilding processes relapsed in CAR and Guinea Bissau. In both instances, the PBC struggled to craft a role for itself. Amidst international division on responses

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to the military coup in Guinea-Bissau in 2012, the Council mandated the Secretary-General and his Special Representative with forging international consensus, but agreed no role for the PBC.<sup>23</sup> As the crisis unfolded in CAR, the PBC could not agree on a Chair for the CAR configuration (the previous Chair had resigned in April 2012 before the crisis had taken hold), discounting the PBC from the equation until Morocco was elected almost two years later in January 2014.

Meanwhile, a larger percentage of the UN's peacebuilding work is conducted through operational settings that are not on the PBC's agenda, including in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. Increasingly peace operations are mandated to carry out peacebuilding tasks in extremely volatile and geopolitically-charged country situations.

The original logic of the PBA would have suggested that the PBC engages with the full range of these countries as and when needed in fostering coherence and advocating for their peacebuilding efforts. There are multiple reasons why this has not happened. In part it is because in these country settings, other mandate areas of peace operations (such as security) may take precedence to allow the creation of an enabling environment. In part the challenge is that parts of the UN and the Security Council lack confidence in the PBC and PBSO's strategic capacity and tools in high profile contexts; whilst the Council continues to exercise caution in allowing the PBC onto Council "turf." In part this is because the PBC's cumbersome procedures and working practices have not resonated with countries which have large international presences on the ground. And in part this is because the PBC has not managed to mobilize resources on a scale that alone would attract countries with existing large aid commitments.

The Peacebuilding Fund is widely recognized to have grown in considerable strength following independent reviews of the fund in 2009 by the UN, by donors in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and again by the UN in 2013.<sup>24</sup> Whilst the 2009 review outlined recommendations for measures to urgently improve the Fund's performance and management, by 2011-2013 the PBF was scoring consistently as good value for money and satisfactory to

strong along a range of performance indicators. The Fund has supported a broad range of peace operations by filling peacebuilding funding gaps and incentivizing the UN to collaborate around common peacebuilding strategies. Countries on the PBC agenda receive proportionately more from the Fund than "non-PBC" countries.<sup>25</sup> The PBF's donor commitments and disbursements have risen steadily, reaching \$86.4m in global disbursements in 2013.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding the PBF's role in a broad range of countries, it remains a fairly small base compared to the large-scale donor commitments in a wider set of countries where there are UN missions. A strategic question for the PBF going forward is how it can further build synergies with, and catalyze a wider range of non-UN funds for peacebuilding.

In the context of the lack of wide traction and institutionalization for the PBA, back in 2010, the UN General Assembly led a review of the Peacebuilding Commission, co-chaired by Ireland, Mexico and the South Africa.<sup>27</sup> Whilst it was still early days for the PBC, the review was somewhat hard-hitting for a UN document. The review acknowledged early impact by the PBC, but also pointedly stated that after five years, the "threshold of success has not been achieved." It confirmed that the momentum that led to the creation of the PBC had waned, and that the PBC lacked overall vision. Countries' initial enthusiasm to join the "agenda" of the PBC had declined as the PBC had struggled to mobilize new resources, and had become associated with heavy bureaucratic processes.

The review laid out a number of recommendations aimed at making the PBC more relevant to the UN system and a wider range of conflict-affected countries. In particular:

- better coordination of all actors in the PBC and with its partners;
- renewed energy for resource mobilization among the PBC membership;
- respect for national ownership;
- above all, it noted that peacebuilding did not follow an automatic sequence of activities and that more flexible,



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agile and lighter forms of diplomatic engagement were needed to replace the burdensome working practices that had emerged.

To get there, the review recognized that the PBC would need a more empowered relationship with the Security Council; that it would need to be better-supported by a more strategic PBSO and synergies with the PBF; and a strengthened communications strategy to re-make the case for the PBC in the aftermath of the early skepticism.

The 2010 review confined itself to reviewing the PBC. However, it pointed to a wider challenging institutional context of the PBA. PBSO continued to struggle to define its niche. The 2010 review noted the lack of institutional memory and knowledge on peacebuilding in the office, a high turnover of, and reliance on, seconded staff, and a tendency to duplicate the work of others rather than convene the UN system as a “centre of excellence.”<sup>28</sup> Above all, the quality of the PBSO’s strategic and policy work was, and continues to be, questioned. In 2013, the Center on International Cooperation found in our “deep dive” on fragile states that the PBSO had not yet fulfilled the function of coordinating peacebuilding policy and best practices for which it had been intended.<sup>29</sup>

In the years that followed the 2010 review, recommendations to the PBC were only partly implemented. The review was based on consultations with the PBC members, but commentators noted that it was not a consensus document of the geopolitical camps within the PBC itself. As a follow-up to the review, the chair of the PBC circulated a series of draft “Roadmaps”, prepared with the assistance of the PBSO. Analysts have noted that these have remained at a high level of abstraction, permitting various actors to quietly undermine or simply ignore proposals that they do not like, reflecting a sense among the PBC membership that its “Organizational Committee” has lacked teeth.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the UN lead departments had felt insufficiently consulted on the review process and outcomes.<sup>31</sup>

In parallel, a rift emerged from 2011 between the PBC and the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (comprised of OECD donors and the g7+ group of fragile states), largely over influence and

authority in global peacebuilding policy. OECD members lobbied hard with UN members for its aid effectiveness agenda, the “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States,” without extensive consultations in the first instance. This alienated some members of the PBC, who raised concerns about a Western-dominated agenda, that subordinated development to security concerns.<sup>32</sup> For its part, the PBC failed to capitalize upon the opportunity with an institutional response to working with the g7+ countries and International Dialogue, which was left to the individual Chairs to navigate in countries which had joined the g7+. The potential result is an ever-growing network of donor-dominated peacebuilding “compacts” and aid allocations on the ground without the buy-in of all relevant powers; and a PBC that risks being marginalized from much of the action in the field. If correct, this would pose a significant step backwards from the founding days of the PBA when the need for greater international coherence was initially recognized.

A steady decline in PBC ambition and countries’ interest in it, a growth in prominence of other UN and international actors who are charged with forging international coherence, and low consensus on the strategic vision, objectives and ambition of the PBA within the PBC and the UN system, have become significant factors preventing the PBC and the PBSO from evolving into a more significant institutional force beyond the recognized efforts of the individual chairs of the CSCs and the PBF.

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## State of the Debate - 2014

In the first quarter of 2014, we conducted a series of interviews with a sample of New York-based actors in the PBC, “agenda countries,” the Security Council and the UN. We tested respondents’ views on the PBA’s impact to date, the options for its future, and the perceived obstacles to revitalizing the PBA. In order to identify potential pathways forward, we tested views on what might be the most useful approach and scope for the planned 2015 review of the PBA, five years on from the General Assembly’s first.

### *Impact to Date*

We found fairly broad-based consensus that the PBC’s value-added is the very fact that it is an inter-governmental body. It involves significant actors in peacebuilding from both North and South; no other institution globally offers this potential diplomatic leverage. We found a widespread view that its impact had been as a diplomatic forum intended to advocate for greater international attention, and to foster coherence, in the UN system and among a broader base of supportive regional and neighboring countries and international institutions (including the IFIs and regional organizations, such as the African Union, the African Development Bank and the World Bank).

In this regard, greater clarity has begun to emerge about some of the viable roles and impacts of the PBC in its current form. We found consensus on two areas of diplomacy where the PBC has managed to achieve an impact: in advocacy for the countries on its agenda, providing a diplomatic platform for countries on the PBC’s agenda which lack a large diplomatic presence; and through engagement of a wide range of institutional actors, regional actors and emerging powers in supporting national development and peacebuilding strategies.

We also identified a widespread recognition that the Peacebuilding Fund had continued to grow from strength to strength, supporting greater UN system coherence on the ground, and identifying important gaps in peacebuilding priorities, more recently responding rapidly to the unfolding crisis in CAR.

## *Major Challenges*

However, there was also little dispute that the PBC’s impact to date has largely been driven by individuals in the PBC. The broad-based membership of the PBC, and its links to other international organizations, have yet to be fully exploited.

We found a growing recognition that criticisms and ‘soul-searching’ around the role of the PBC were partly the result of over-loaded expectations. The PBC does not have a field presence, delegated resources from its capitals, or technical expertise to support strategic planning, to provide technical advice, to deliver significant volumes of new ODA or to coordinate donors on the ground. In the absence of a strategic mandate for the PBA in its founding resolutions, we found an understanding that the institutions were unlikely to be able to create this space, even if they were resourced to do so. We found an emerging consensus that these country-level strategic planning and technical roles were more effectively performed by state and non-state actors in the field. And we found a recognition that the PBC is not the only body charged with forging international coherence.

The PBC had not effectively communicated and managed expectations about what it can do, what it cannot do, and its impact. This was a result, both of a lack of consensus among the PBC on what its tools were, and in part a lack of coherent action and vision among the PBC’s Organizational Committee. As a result, peacebuilding actors across capitals remained unclear as to the objectives and impact of the PBC, which continued to contribute to diluting the PBC’s diplomatic traction.

Actors in the PBC and the UN shared a view that the PBC’s impact is also constrained by remaining insufficiently connected to the UN system’s lead departments. In addition, whilst the PBF was broadly recognized as a high-performing tool for the UN, and some Chairs reported that they were happy with the secretariat-type support that they receive from PBSO, there remains a broad-based consensus that PBSO struggles to deliver on its strategic and policy functions, without which the PBC itself

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continues to struggle to define its vision, objectives and a substantive agenda.

We found limited evidence that trust and close working relations between the PBC and the Security Council had improved very significantly since 2010. Despite efforts to strengthen ties, the dynamics did not appear to have shifted significantly: whilst the Council was initially intended to have a proactive oversight role of the PBC, its interest had waned and the PBC had felt unduly marginalized from the Council's deliberations (given its mandate to advise the Council on progress in peacebuilding); and some members of the Council remained unconvinced as to the "value-added" and impact of the advice that the PBC (and PBSO) had offered vis-à-vis UN leaders in the field.<sup>33</sup>

### **Options for the Future**

Despite the ongoing challenges, we did find evidence across a range of countries that there is energy to revamp the PBA. In this regard, countries see two major opportunities to clear a pathway forward: Brazil's leadership of, and vision for, the PBC's Organizational Committee; and the upcoming 2015 review of the PBA.

A number of proposals are currently being mooted or in track to strengthen the PBC's role, relevance and impact in the international system. These include to:

- deepen impact in countries "on the agenda" through mobilizing a wider range of neighboring countries and regional powers to support peacebuilding processes. Morocco's strategy as the new chair of the CAR CSC was seen as a major opportunity for the PBC to craft a diplomatic role in fostering dialogue and coherence between CAR's neighbours and powers in the region; and to build the PBC's strategic relevance as an advisor to the Council.
- build up strategic links between the PBC and other important parts of the international system, including the IFIs and the African Union. Actors saw the value in doing so to advance international coherence on key peacebuilding policies and strategies, and to more

effectively draw upon the broad base of the PBC's membership, especially from the African Union, to build influence in the international system.

- scale up the substantive capacity and vision of the PBC itself through root and branch change in the way that its Organizational Committee operates. The current proposal is to make the PBC "roadmap" and annual report more substantive and binding of member-states, and to convene an annual session of the PBC which galvanizes engagement from capitals, and builds political space for the body.
- develop a PBC policy function which focuses on a wider set of global and regional challenges to peace and security, especially where international responses remain fragmented or insufficient, such as natural resource management, transnational threats (organized crime, illicit financial flows), regional peacebuilding strategies, sub-national conflicts, and potentially performing a role in more effective horizon scanning and conflict prevention.
- review the construct and balance of the PBC to improve its relevance, agility and impact. Whilst there are a range of views on the relative weight and importance of the CSCs and the Organizational Committee, and whether the PBC's "Working Group on Lessons Learned" could be integrated into a stronger policy role for the Organizational Committee, there was appetite to stand back and collectively review the construct, and its working practices.
- there is also consideration of the Organizational Committee's powers to adopt resolutions, statements and advisory notes. However, it remains less clear what resources, authorities and tools the PBC would deliver on to back its decisions given the founding resolutions of the PBA. To this end, countries would need to consider whether they can broaden the existing interpretation of the PBC's founding resolutions, or whether there is any appetite to recommend revisiting the founding resolutions themselves.

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## Obstacles to Reform

Notwithstanding the creative ideas on the table, the PBC faces three major obstacles going forward. The first obstacle is skepticism. There remain major questions about what the PBC is able to offer, and related skepticism about whether the PBC is truly committed to reform of the PBA, or committed to being the counter-weight to the Council that emerged in the aftermath of 2005. The relapses in Guinea-Bissau and CAR, while not attributed to the PBC, have raised new questions about the PBC's effectiveness in fostering global coherence in high profile cases, and should create pause for thought about whether the PBC should venture into conflict prevention. This on-going skepticism points to a need for an inclusive and broad-based reform process if the future of the PBA is not to remain trapped between established camps (North and South, PBC and Council).

The second obstacle is strategic and analytical capacity. A small handful of PBC members are pursuing creative ideas for strengthening the relevance and impact of the PBC. The existing challenges to the impact of the PBA - active participation of members beyond the chairs, a strategic PBSO, and a PBC which is connected with the wider UN system - have not been overcome.

The third obstacle is a lack of clarity on what authorities, tools and resources the PBC is able to put on the table for countries, within the PBC membership itself, and among the PBC's stakeholders. Beyond new ODA (which the PBC has struggled to mobilize) authorities, tools and resources might range from resolutions, to mediation, to facilitating contact groups, to leveraging and advising a range of

international organizations, to strategic communications and investment. The lack of a strict formula does provide creative and flexible space for the PBC, but the lack of common understanding and consensus on the range of tools, authorities and resources also breeds confusion and indifference to engaging with reform. Many respondents underlined that African countries and other "middle and rising powers" may hold the key to unlocking the PBC's potential.

What pathways then might the PBC, Council and the UN consider in order to navigate towards a more relevant and effective PBA in the future?

## Pathways: Options and Political Capital to 2015

During interviews, we found the following four broad scenarios reflect the state of the debate in New York on the future of the PBA:

1. The first option is to more tightly and clearly define the role of the PBA. This would not necessarily dilute the current ambition of the PBA, but give it a more concretely defined menu of tasks and activities upon which it can deliver in various contexts, and upon which expectations can be managed. These might involve focusing on the PBA's existing areas of obvious impact, such as the success of the PBC's diplomatic roles in advocacy and fostering coherence, as well as the PBC's established roles.
2. The second option is to revamp the existing PBA construct. This option would involve making the PBA successful in its current format and would require a significant uplift in the PBA's strategic vision, substantive capacity, authority and communications, and connections to the UN system. A revamp would require a heavy lift to conduct outreach to a wide range of countries to inject energy and momentum into policy and country-related work. The gap between the status quo and this option is wide because the PBC does rely very heavily on individual Chairs to deliver its current impact, and does not receive the strategic policy support that it wants from the UN.

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3. The third option is to rethink the PBA construct. This could involve the UN lead departments working directly with the PBC, which would overcome a number of institutional obstacles and frustrations within the PBC. It could involve a stronger role for the UN lead departments in leading UN policy globally (potentially taking over from PBSO), and in working with the PBC on global strategic and substantive questions of peacebuilding. It could involve re-engineering the format of the PBC itself, including the relative roles, weight and authorities of the Organizational Committee, CSCs and Working Group on Lessons Learned.
  4. The fourth option is to walk away. This option would posit that the UN system has grown significantly in a wide range of peacebuilding contexts and in variants of peacebuilding and multidimensional peacekeeping missions. Under this option, peacebuilding actors would dedicate focus on operational efforts and impact of the UN on the ground.

Whilst national positions are still being considered, we found the majority of respondents broadly favored a direction towards some combination of the second and third scenarios. Accordingly, all respondents wanted to set a high “watermark” for the ambition of the 2015 review in order to breathe back energy into the PBA. To achieve a high “watermark,” the scope of the review would need to be both deep, to thoroughly assess the logic, construct, impact, authorities, resources, tools and capacities of the PBA; and wide, to assess the state of play on international peacebuilding efforts in which the PBA is embedded.

In order to pursue this path, methodologically there was a strong case for including in the Terms of Reference provision for assessing a range of peacebuilding contexts where the PBC had and had not engaged. Evidence about the impact of the PBC remains mainly anecdotal. A sample of rigorously tested case studies could point both to where the PBA had achieved impact and where it had missed opportunities in the countries where it was engaged; and whether and where international coherence had been sufficient or lacking in countries where the PBC was not. Such case studies could usefully develop a stronger

evidence base for the impact of the PBC and the UN in sample contexts, and assess the (potential) impact of the PBA alongside other international diplomatic constructs aimed at forging consensus and international coherence.

Politically, there was a strong case for an inclusive review process, involving the PBC, the UN Secretariat and agencies, and the Council. The selection of facilitators and substantive experts would be crucial, both to the success of an ambitious review, and to prevent North-South and PBC-Council divisions from dominating. The credibility of such a review would likely be enhanced by a strong representation of countries which are highly active in peacebuilding, be they countries “on the agenda,” powers in regional organizations, BRICS and other major investors in peacebuilding contexts, and traditional donors. Wider insights could also be gleaned from consultation with civil society actors involved in peacebuilding, especially at the country level. There is likely to be limited utility in reiterating the ODA commitments of OECD donors in conflict-affected countries. The potentially greater value of the PBC is its inclusive membership, and as such, a review process which enables “middle and rising powers” to also articulate their potential contributions and tools could shed more light on the “value-added” of the PBA going forward.

We found there was more limited value in a more tightly defined scope for the 2015 review that would simply assess the impact of the PBC in the countries on its “agenda.” First, such a methodology would be unlikely to reveal very much that was new. There is a broad understanding in New York of the results that the PBA has and has not been able to achieve, and a broad understanding that the results have been driven by individual relationships. Reviewing the efforts of individuals simply reinforces the burden upon them. Second, such a methodology is unlikely to blaze a trail towards a revamped or revised PBA. A deeper and wider scope will reveal the bigger questions about the objectives and resulting authorities and tools of the PBA in the future.

Similarly, the first scenario had little traction with respondents. Whilst on balance it reflected the *status quo*, it was unlikely that new countries would continue to join

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the agenda of the PBC, whilst the PBC's inter-governmental political role would be constrained from emerging, a possibility that would undercut the current efforts of the PBC's Chair to energize the PBC's Organizational Committee.

The fourth scenario may seem neither tenable nor acceptable to many members of the PBC, but a range of countries and offices of the UN have *de facto* stepped down their engagement with the PBC and PBSO over time, and now judge the 2015 review to be the "last chance." The process for the 2015 review must re-engage skeptical actors, and demonstrate the commitment to prevent this scenario from unfolding.

Before concluding this short paper, there are two final points on the bigger picture that will need to be taken into account as actors consider the future of the PBA.

First, the PBA is not the only dated and challenged culprit in the UN's peace and security architecture. A multiplicity of institutional mandates, functions and departments have mushroomed over the last twenty years, across DPKO, DPA, DFS, UNDP and beyond. Evidently, the PBSO has not emerged to convene and strategically guide this system. Nor is it likely to be able to. But there is a strong case for reviewing the sum total of the UN's peace and security institutions, mandates, funds, missions and offices. Such a review can only be steered to conclusion and implementation by a Secretary-General, and the last two years of the current incumbent's term is unlikely to be the appropriate timing. Suffice to underline that the 2015 review of the PBA needs to keep in mind the longer-term picture for the UN's ever-growing role in peacebuilding.

The 2015 review of the PBA offers participants an opportunity to contribute to shaping the bigger debate. A broad approach to the review, which draws on rigorous case studies of peacebuilding effectiveness in countries where the PBC has and has not operated, will offer the PBC the opportunity to consider how it can build its own relevance beyond a confined list of countries, and an opportunity to build consensus around major questions that should be put on the table about the future of the UN's wider peace and security efforts.

Second, the negotiations on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) come to fruition at the same time as the 2015 review of the PBA. The framing of the 2015 review needs to reflect upon the relationships between the two processes. Neither are bound to one another, but how the international development system ultimately decides to reflect upon the linkages between peace and development will have implications for the future priorities and working practices of the PBA. In particular, the 2015 review of the PBA could offer thoughts about how the PBA can encourage better integration of development approaches into security efforts, and how the UN's peace and security efforts can better contribute to the foundations for long-term development.

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## Conclusions

At the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly, Brazil's Permanent Representative, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, proposed the value and potential of the PBA:

*The composition and inter-governmental character of the PBC provide it with the authority and legitimacy to articulate strategic guidance, forge greater coherence, and strengthen national and regional ownership of peacebuilding efforts. As a diplomatic platform that is mandated to advise the General Assembly and the Security Council, and that brings together key regional and global actors, the PBC is uniquely placed to promote greater harmony between the sub-regional, regional and international dimensions of post-conflict response.<sup>34</sup>*

Achieving this ambitious role for the PBA will be deeply challenging unless leaders are able to overcome the reasons that have negatively shaped the PBA's foundations, and able to position the institutions alongside wider international efforts. As such, countries and entities of the UN that want to revive the PBA will need to build a coalition that crosses North-South and Council-PBC divides, set a high "watermark" for the scope, ambition and leadership of the review, and steer the process towards conclusions that set out the PBA's authorities and roles and that sharpen its tools. There are high expectations that Brazil will be able to revamp the dynamic of the discussions around the PBA; an opportunity not to be missed.

Given the complex range of institutional and political challenges that face the PBA on the one hand, and the complexity of current conflicts and peacebuilding requirements on the other, serious consideration needs to be given to the scope of the 2015 review. Its scope should be shaped not just by form (the existing PBA construct), but the wider context in which it operates and the impact the PBA needs to have to be "relevant, catalytic and effective." Recommendations for the future of the PBA should ultimately be derived from a renewed analysis of the role of an intergovernmental PBA, alongside other international mechanisms, if countries are to finally exit a cyclical dialogue on the "value-added" of the PBA.

## Annex: UN Peace Operations and Peacebuilding

Both types of UN crisis management operations - military peacekeeping operations and civilian led special political missions - directly contribute to the peacebuilding. The intransient link between peacekeeping and peacebuilding has long been recognized. Over the past two decades, peacekeeping operations have evolved from carrying out primarily military tasks, such as ceasefire monitoring, to include multidimensional mandates that include a broad range of peacebuilding tasks, such as security sector reform. In 2000, five years prior to the establishment of the PBA, the Brahimi report underlined the important roles peacekeepers play in carrying out critical peacebuilding tasks. In January 2013, the Security Council passed resolution 2986, reaffirming the "importance of multidimensional peacekeeping" and highlighted the "contributions that peacekeepers and peacekeeping missions make to early peacebuilding."<sup>35</sup>

Of the 15 peacekeeping operations currently in the field, 9 are mandated by the Security Council to carry out multidimensional mandates. In the field, peacekeeping operations contribute to peacebuilding efforts by i) working with national counterparts and international partners on articulating peacebuilding priorities and providing strategic guidance; ii) assisting in establishing an enabling environment for the implementation of peacebuilding tasks; and by iii) implementing peacebuilding tasks themselves.<sup>36</sup> At the headquarters level, the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Field Support (DFS) work with the Peacebuilding Support Office as well as other partners "to ensure appropriate planning, execution, resourcing and staffing of peacebuilding aspects" of peacekeeping operations, while the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) provides crucial support to peacebuilding efforts on the country level.<sup>37</sup>

Political missions work with the PBA through a network of field-based missions in countries that are also on the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) agenda.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the UN office in Burundi, this includes integrated

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peacebuilding offices in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and the Central African Republic that focus on harmonizing efforts of the UN family on the ground to carry out comprehensive peacebuilding strategies. The offices provide the PBC with a direct link to the field, which can inform guidance the Commission provides on integrated peacebuilding strategies. The PBC's proximity to key UN bodies, including the Security Council, meanwhile can benefit efforts in the field through building strategic priorities across the UN system, mobilizing resources for peacebuilding activities and by sustaining attention on post-conflict countries. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) can apply for PBF funding to support activities and programs in political mission country settings, that functions as a flexible mechanism to fill critical peacebuilding gaps.

Peacebuilding processes are at different stages in each of the countries on the PBC's agenda and the experience of coordination between peace operations and the Commission is varied. In Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia combined engagement has contributed to the stabilization of the countries, while the situations in Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic deteriorated. Guinea-Bissau's government was toppled by a military coup in April 2012 and saw its elections that would allow for a return to constitutional order postponed until April 2014. In the Central African Republic meanwhile, rebels toppled the government in March 2013 and the ensuing violence forced the temporary relocation of staff of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office. Given the worsening of the security situation, the Peacebuilding Office will be replaced by a UN peacekeeping operation later this year that will take over command from the French and African Union forces that are already on the ground. The reasons for the success or failure in the various countries are wide-ranging and beyond the scope of this short overview. However, previous reviews of the PBC have shown that generally engagement between peace operations and the PBC is most effective when there is a close work relationship between the head of a UN mission and the Chair of a PBC Country Configuration,<sup>39</sup> enabling closer coordination and coordination of the key actors involved and making use of the PBC's advocacy and resource mobilization role.

Meanwhile, a large percentage of the UN's peacebuilding work is conducted through operational settings of peacekeeping operations and political missions that are not on the PBC's agenda, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. Increasingly peace operations are mandated to carry out peacebuilding tasks in extremely volatile country situations. In these country settings, other mandate areas such as the protection of civilians and the extension of state authority may take precedence over peacebuilding activities to allow the creation of an enabling environment. Dangerous operating environments may also restrict movement of mission staff, hindering the effective roll out of peacebuilding activities and missions still content with insufficiently flexible staffing processes that make it difficult to acquire peacebuilding experts when needed. As mentioned above, the Peacebuilding Fund can support peace operations by filling peacebuilding funding gaps, though countries on the PBC agenda receive proportionately more from the Fund than non-PBC countries.<sup>40</sup> With \$86.4 million in disbursements in 2013,<sup>41</sup> the PBF also has a fairly small base, given the large scale funding needs in countries emerging from conflict.

Despite these obstacles, peace operations do play an important role in peacebuilding, as early peacebuilders that help create enabling environments, in providing strategic guidance to national counterparts, in harmonizing and coordinating peacebuilding activities by the UN Country Team and international actors on the ground, and by implementing peacebuilding tasks themselves. Given peace operations' central role in peacebuilding, there is a need for improved cooperation and coordination between key headquarter based actors including DPKO, DFS, DPA, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Security Council as well as actors in the field, including national governments, heads of missions and the UN Country Teams.



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<sup>2</sup>*Methodological note*: This short political analysis is intended as a frank and provocative contribution to countries' deliberations on structuring the scope and ambition of the 2015 review of the PBA. In order to develop this political analysis, we surveyed existing primary and secondary literature sources on the UN PBA, and developed propositions on the impact, options and scenarios for the PBA, which we triangulated through sample key-informant interviews with members of the PBC and Security Council, drawn from North and South, and with a sample of UN representatives charged with peacebuilding policy in New York. In order to make a frank contribution, all interviews were conducted under the Chatham House Rule. This paper is not intended to be a qualitative or quantitative survey of the PBA. There would be strong merit in a rigorous evaluation, drawing upon original field data collection techniques and existing secondary data. However, it is beyond the scope of this short political analysis. Nor is this paper intended as a consensus document which reflects compromise views among all stakeholders> It will fall upon the UN to negotiate an outcome document. Nor is this paper intended to provide an overview of the field of peacebuilding across organizations and academia, which would be a significantly more elaborate exercise.

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