

**Message of the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission
At the ECOSOC Management Segment**

Virtual Meeting 21 July 2020

[as prepared for delivery]

**Your Excellency Mr. Munir Akram, Vice President of ECOSOC,
Excellencies,**

Thank you for inviting me to brief ECOSOC on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission with conflict-affected African countries.

This is a critical time for countries affected by conflict. The COVID-19 pandemic is both a public health emergency and a human crisis, devastating communities throughout the world and impacting especially the poorest and most vulnerable. In this connection, it is important to ensure that the pandemic does not reverse progress in gender equality, women's empowerment, and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

Hard-won peacebuilding gains are at risk as the pandemic has destroyed livelihoods, threatened social cohesion, strained the capacity of governance institutions, and increased instability. The crisis may potentially exacerbate underlying tensions, as well as compounding already dire humanitarian situations in affected countries. The socio-economic impact of the crisis on people in vulnerable situations is a particular concern.

The challenges of this pandemic underscore the imperative of coherent, multi-dimensional and coordinated UN system response, along the integrated logic of the SDGs, in support of national peacebuilding priorities.

This calls for enhanced collaboration between the PBC and ECOSOC to advance conflict-sensitive and inclusive assistance that help address the present health and humanitarian crisis and contribute to durable peace and sustainable development. Responses to the

pandemic must recognize the importance of leaving no one behind and ensure that the most vulnerable are protected and empowered

At its thematic meetings on the “Impact of COVID-19 on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace” and “Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19”, on 8 April and 5 June respectively, the Commission echoed the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire and urgent action within the framework of his plan and report entitled «Shared Responsibilities, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19» to fight the pandemic and deliver on national priorities, including basic services

Additionally, since April, the PBC convened a series of virtual consultations to hear from countries and regions how they are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and foster a coherent response by the international community.

These consultations highlighted the urgent need to support countries to safeguard their capacities to fight the pandemic while continuing to accompany them in advancement of their medium and long-term national peacebuilding priorities, taking into full account the most vulnerable and women and youth. They also called for predictable and coordinated financial support as well as regional initiatives to combat exploitation of the crisis.

The various consultations also served as a platform for exchange of lessons learned and good practices among the countries, including lessons from the successful fight against Ebola in West Africa.

In Guinea-Bissau, in March 2020, the de facto Government established an Inter-ministerial Committee with the dual task of focusing on the health response and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, and developed a national response plan with the support of the United Nations. The UN Resident Coordinator, WHO and World Bank have

In response to COVID-19, the Peacebuilding Fund has reallocated funds where needed in support of national priorities, such as local peace initiatives and community engagement in implementing ceasefires, inclusive dialogues, strategic communication to prevent the spread of misinformation and hate speech, strengthening engagement of women and youth in COVID-19 responses and exploring programs to support the Secretary-General's call for global ceasefire.

Member States have recognized that an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and development actors, within and outside of the United Nations system, consistent with their respective mandates, and the Charter, is critical to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and essential for improving respect for human rights, gender equality, empowering women and youth, strengthening the rule of law, eradicating poverty, building institutions, and advancing ,o