Report on the Geneva Thematic Consultations
in the context of the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture

Background

This document summarizes the key outcomes from the thematic consultations in the context of the 2020 United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR), held from 18-19 February 2020 in Geneva. The Consultations were facilitated by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, in partnership with Switzerland. They brought together more than 200 stakeholders that operate primarily out of International Geneva. The participants included representatives of Member States, Geneva-based International Organizations, International Civil Society Organizations, the Private Sector, and Academia. The Consultations were organized according to the Terms of Reference for the informal phase of the 2020 PBA.

Since its inception, the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (UNPBA) has made considerable progress in advancing a coherent and holistic approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, linking peace and security, development, and human rights. The PBA has also aimed at advancing partnerships for peacebuilding that can respond to the increasingly complex manifestations of armed conflict. The UN's efforts to operationalize sustaining peace offer valuable lessons learned and help to identify critical gaps, concerning operational and policy coherence, as well as partnerships for peacebuilding.

As these are significant concerns for International Geneva, the Consultations focused specifically on policy/operational coherence, as well as partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In addition to plenary discussions on these themes, five break-out sessions were held for smaller groups to engage in greater detail with specific aspects, assess progress, identify concrete learning examples and formulate suggestions for the 2020 PBAR. The groups shed light on the role of peace-responsive programming to operationalize sustaining peace across the system; integrated analysis to enable coherent action on humanitarian, development, peace and security challenges; governance-driven approaches to security; the role of human rights in sustaining peace; and gender-responsive peacebuilding.

This report was produced by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and its five partners – the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF); the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Interpeace; and Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva (QUNO) – in collaboration with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland. The report synthesizes the key messages of the participants of the Consultations. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, its five partners, or those of Switzerland.

Reading advice: Key messages are highlighted in **bold.** Suggestions are highlighted in *italic.*

Strengthening Coherence and Partnerships with a Broad Range of Actors

The implementation of the concept of sustaining peace has led to a more comprehensive and holistic engagement across the three pillars of the UN system. However, **sustaining peace efforts should more actively leverage the potential of** a broad range of actors from different sectors and levels that do not automatically identify themselves as **peacebuilding organizations.** It has long been established that conflict-sensitive practice is critical to ensuring do-no-harm and sustainable peace approaches. While conflict sensitivity is crucial, sustaining peace calls for humanitarian, development, human rights and other actors to shift their approaches beyond conflict sensitivity to make active contributions to peace.

Interpeace has operationalized such a forward-leaning and proactive approach, called peace responsiveness. This approach enables organizations to deliberately design for – and realize – peace outcomes through their technical programming. **Where deliberate peacebuilding efforts occurs across a wider range of actors, peace-responsiveness is enabled by several key factors:** (1) increased emphasis on working with existing local capacities and on promoting inclusion and trust at the level of programs; (2) articulating and documenting the contributions of socio-economic interventions to peace at the level of the organization; and (3) a shift in working methods, and a move towards more flexible and long-term funding mechanisms at the systemic level.

The UN Secretary-General's (SGs) Report (S2018/43, §59) calls for UN peace operations and country teams to strengthen community-level engagement and participation with national and local stakeholders through dedicated strategies. *The Consultation participants noted that the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) could establish more robust standards, which can ensure that UN peacebuilding approaches result in process-driven programming that properly engages local actors in the design phase and achieves local ownership and leadership of those peacebuilding processes. They also highlighted that there could be clear reporting on widely agreed criteria to inform whether the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is properly supporting locally-owned capacity and resilience-enhancing peacebuilding practices. This could later extend to reviewing other UN agency portfolios on such criteria. Besides, the PBSO could review the 18-month funding window of the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) for PBF funds, as it is currently too short for realizing sustainable, capacity-building approaches.*

There exist important learning examples for cross-sectorial partnerships for peacebuilding. For example, the linkages to organizations that work towards social justice in order to address the underlying causes of conflict could be further strengthened. *The participants suggested that Resident Coordinators (RCs), for instance, could work more closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to devise employment programs that can support peacebuilding processes.* In addition, *disarmament and arms control could play a more substantial role in sustaining peace and particularly conflict prevention, for instance as part of risk assessments, Common Country Analyses or Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Disarmament could also be leveraged more strongly in the early phases of peace processes, including during interim security measures, rather than only in post-conflict peacebuilding.* Alternative approaches to disarmament that are conflict-sensitive are also required. Efforts to prevent and address forced displacement could be strengthened as part of the sustaining peace agenda. Addressing displacement is essential for building peace, including through the establishment of dedicated international mechanisms and by fostering dialogue with relevant actors on national, regional and global levels. *The discussions underlined opportunities for the PBA to leverage the peacebuilding potential of other sectors, notably water governance, the management of natural ressources as well as public health, including the World Health Organization's (WHO) approach to foster confidence at the frontlines and it's new White Paper on Health and Peace.*

Finally, **more work needs to be invested into how the private sector can be incentivized to contribute to peacebuilding.** Positive examples include cases where the entrepreneurial potential of peacebuilding can be harnessed. The establishment of peace investment funds as well as peacebuilding bonds in order to enhance conflict-sensitive investments in countries affected by conflict is an excellent example of how to incentivize actors that work within a market-driven logic. Overall, *the participants also underlined the importance of strengthening partnerships with the private sector and scaling up innovative approaches to sustaining peace.*

<u>Strengthening Coherence and Partnerships at the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus</u>

The UN System has made gains in strengthening the contribution of humanitarian and development actors to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The SG's Report (S2018/43, §18) has reiterated the need to create greater coherence by restructuring the peace-and-security pillar and aligning it more closely with the development and human rights pillars. The PBA, particularly the PBF, has contributed to consolidating the normative shift of the concept of sustaining peace and enabling a more substantial contribution of humanitarian and development actors to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, some resistance remains among humanitarian and development actors to the integration of sustaining peace into their work.

In consequence, **there is a need for more information and awareness-raising of how development and humanitarian interventions (e.g. on health or employment) can contribute to peacebuilding.** The understanding around possible contributions of humanitarian and development interventions to sustaining peace needs to be further enhanced, by clarifying the pathways and theories of change, based on robust evidence. *The participants emphasized that the PBSO, the PBF, and non-UN actors could significantly scale-up support to UN agencies, supporting them to adopt conflict-sensitive and peace responsive approaches. While doing so, the PBSO, the PBF and non-UN actors could be encouraged to work together and pool resources, in order to increase investments in design, monitoring and evaluation to inform learning on the pathways through which peacebuilding, development, humanitarian, human rights and security actors can jointly contribute to peace.*

A stronger engagement of humanitarian and development actors requires arriving at a common understanding of peace that is more palpable for humanitarian actors. *The technical discussions pointed to the importance for the 2020 PBAR to place renewed emphasis on how the notions of peacebuilding and sustaining peace have gone beyond their traditional "post-conflict" understandings to encompass a variety of activities from prevention to preparedness and early warning, to the peace potential of humanitarian action in protracted crises.*

A coherent approach also requires a joined-up analysis. Such analysis must give due attention to relevant voices and perceptions to resonate with all stakeholders involved and to create a sense of shared ownership. The SGs Report (S2018/43, § 15) calls for integrated strategic assessments, involving development, humanitarian and human rights actors, to strengthen the coherence of the UN System. The SGs Report (S2018/43, §22) also calls for a joined-up analysis of risks at the field level that translates into coherent strategies. However, such an approach has been difficult to operationalize in practice because analyses are conducted on various levels (with different data points) and for different purposes (such as programme evaluations or assessments). Sharing analysis across stakeholders is a cautious first step but this is different from "joint" or "integrated" analysis that presupposes that there is a more ambitious common framework for data collection and analysis. While "integrated analysis" is the ultimate goal, there should therefore be a recognition of the steps needed to get there. *Based on this analysis, the participants suggested that the PBA could facilitate the development of a shared understanding of "joined-up" and "common" analysis that can also serve as a trust-building exercise among national and international stakeholders.*

Currently, as emphasized by an ongoing joint project between the CCDP and UN-OCHA on "Action Learning for Conflict Analysis" (ALCA), a wide range of international and local actors carry out analyses on multiple levels for many different reasons and purposes. Analysis also always has a political dimension. Therefore, **joined-up analysis needs to involve actors across all pillars of the UN system.** Especially, it should draw on the expertise of the human rights, humanitarian, disarmament and arms control communities, as well as civil society, and should include national and local capacities. *The experience of this project therefore illustrates how the PBA could create a mechanism to ensure the quality and accuracy of the methodologies and the data that such analyses produce – for instance through peer-to-peer review, based on common standards.* **Frequently there also exists a disconnect between analysis and programming.** For joined-up analysis to contribute effectively to coherence, it needs to inform programming more actively across the pillars. *The PBF could therefore leverage the analytical capacities across the pillars to inform its programming and funding decisions.*

Strengthening Prevention through Promoting Good Governance of the Security Sector

The 2015 PBAR has been mostly silent about the role of the security sector in preventing conflict and building peace. However, the good governance of the security sector plays a vital role in preventing violent conflict. Security institutions (armed forces, police, and other security services) can maintain stability during periods of high tension, build trust with and among communities, and step in to protect people from violence and intimidation. Conversely, security institutions can ignite grievances and fuel violent conflict. Therefore, **it is essential to focus on improving the accountability of security forces**. DCAF's work in the Sahel serves as an illustrative example wherein the abusive behavior of security forces is known to contribute to increased support to violent extremist organizations. DCAF has thus focused on supporting countries in question to strengthening the capacity of oversight actors such as the Inspector General and Office of the National Mediator.

The political dimensions of sustaining peace need to be acknowledged more strongly. Consultation participants pointed to the need to take into account the political and economic incentive structures that run counter to the goal of improving governance. Similarly, there is a need to recognize that good governance must originate from, and permeate, the highest levels of political structures. *To address the political dimension, the PBA could support and engage with mediation communities and tap into their know-how on facilitating agreement on politically sensitive issues, such as the governance of the security sector. It is particularly essential to capitalize on the move of PBSO to DPPA, which could enable a better linkage of mediation and peacebuilding issues, including Security Sector Reform (SSR).*

The SGs Report (S2018/43, §23) states that national ownership and priorities should be respected. **The tension between national and local ownership and the demand for external assistance in many peacebuilding contexts needs to be better reconciled.** Therefore, there is a need to unpack the notion of ownership and more closely link it to the notion of inclusivity. Engaging with and including broader segments of society is necessary. However, **when ensuring inclusive ownership, there has been a tendency to focus solely on the engagement with civil society, the private sector, and other actors.** From a prevention angle, however, the security sector is often at the heart of conflict. *The discussions thus highlighted that sustaining peace needs to broaden its understanding of ownership and more seriously incorporate engagement with the security sector and its policy frameworks and operational fieldwork.*

External actors need to hold themselves more accountable for their efforts to promote national ownership and inclusivity. A DCAF study of 110 SSR-related evaluations conducted by multilateral and bilateral actors found that less than 10% explicitly used "ownership" as a criterion for evaluation. Moreover, more efforts are required to capitalize on the rich information collected through monitoring and evaluation efforts. Investing more in mid-term evaluations of SSR projects that can enable corrective action or provide an early warning function can be vital for prevention. The DCAF study also showed that approximately 70% of evaluations were end-of-project evaluations, thereby inhibiting corrective action and the ability to act preventatively. *This suggests that in order to increase accountability at all levels, and specifically among external actors, monitoring and evaluation cycles could be adjusted from end-of-project evaluations to mid-term evaluations. Their outputs can then be leveraged to enable corrective and preventative action.*

Strengthening Coherence and Partnerships with Human Rights Mechanisms

The strong recognition of the interdependence of peace and security, development, *and human rights* has been a vital achievement of the last review. Resolutions A/70/262 and S/RES/2282 of 2016 encouraged Member States participating in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process to consider the human rights dimension of peacebuilding. Nonetheless, the SG's report (S2019/448, § 24) reiterates that the peace-and-security and development pillars should make better use of all human rights mechanisms. The UN thus needs to step up in showing impact of its human rights mechanisms at the institutional, intergovernmental and country levels.

Human rights have a role throughout the peace-and-conflict cycle: they are essential to building resilient societies, early warning, preventing destructive conflict, providing the basis for accountability, and rebuilding societies. This is echoed in the recent "Overview of consultations on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations" (A/HRC/43/37) presented to the Human Rights Council pursuant to resolution 38/18. It has also been recognized by the SG's report (S2019/448, § 25), which states that human rights should be considered in broader efforts to address conflict drivers.

Progress in strengthening the role of human rights in sustaining peace has been made on various fronts, *inter alia* through the a joint project of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and QUNO on "Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)"; the creation of a joint OHCHR-PBSO work plan for 2019/20; the OHCHR's engagement in 1) the Joint Steering Committee to Advance the Humanitarian Development Collaboration (JSC); 2) the development of a rights-based integrated analysis under the Human Rights Up Front initiative (HRUF); 3) the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC); the Special Procedures (SPs) engagement with PBSO; the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures (CCSPs) letter to the Security Council; and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights project on business in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Geneva actors further recognized the importance of economic social and cultural rights and emphasized the need for long-term approaches based on the identification of the root causes of crises. The human rights contribution to context analysis and joint planning frameworks for sustaining peace is also of pivotal importance. Without it, important protection gaps or blind spots may emerge. Besides, it is critical to safeguard the space, voice and agency of civil society for ensuring national and local ownership. Its protection and participation in Geneva, New York and at the country level is often compromised, and reprisals are on the rise.

Consequently, **international human rights mechanisms need to be leveraged as entry points by different actors.** *The participants stressed that the role of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and human rights could be fully taken on board in the 2020 PBAR. It could be reflected in the future of the PBA and throughout the UN system*. Importantly, the full potential of human rights to contribute to conflict prevention, to build and sustain peace, can only be achieved if the human rights pillar is adequately staffed and funded.

Discussions also revealed the opportunity for the PBA to further leverage the role of human rights for sustaining peace. *Consultation participants emphasized that a subsequent sustaining peace resolution could recognize the role of human rights mechanisms beyond the UPR. The PBC could strengthen its bridging role, including its engagement with human rights mechanisms. Further exchange on this topic could explore thematic approaches to enable human rights perspectives to be included in country-specific configurations, better integrate the knowledge of Special Procedures to encourage human rights discussions in New York beyond the Third Committee, ensure meaningful civil society participation in the PBC, and encourage informal briefings by the HRC to the PBC and vice-versa. In addition, the PBA could make use of the UPR, recommendations of Treaty Bodies (TBs), and of relevant reports of other Human Rights bodies in the analysis of underlying causes of conflict in country situations.*

In addition, Consultation participants emphasized that human rights mechanisms could directly contribute to sustaining peace as part of their own mandate. *The participants suggested that the High Commissioner could provide early warning briefings to the HRC. The HRC could more proactively share information with the PBC through the SG. The OHCHR could consider creating the position of a sustaining peace focal point in Geneva. Finally, additional exchange between human rights and peacebuilding professionals could explore how to strengthen and enhance human rights capacity and funding in doing its share on prevention. These developments include the new thematic PBF priorities, the new role and status of the RC as well as the Common Country Analysis (CCAs) / UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.*

Gender-responsive Peacebuilding

According to the SGs Report (S2018/43, §27), the participation of women in peacebuilding and gender-responsive peacebuilding should be further strengthened. **Since UN Security Council Resolution 1325,**

progress has been made in a number of key areas. Resolutions have been passed by the Security Council addressing the issue of conflict sexual violence as well as addressing women as agents in conflicts. The Seven-Point Action Plan of the SG on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding has been a key step and adequately covers all the actions required for women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding. In addition, increased funding has been made available for gender and peacebuilding, including through the PBF, and for staffing of missions with gender advisors and technical staff on sexual and gender-based violence.

However, several shortcomings and gaps remain. **There is a lack of proper evaluation of the implementation of the Seven-Point Action Plan. The implementation and impact of this plan are yet to be reviewed.** The SG's Report (S2018/43, §64) states that women participation in conflict prevention should be further strengthened, including through dedicated funding. The SG's report (S2019/448, §29) further stressed that financing for peacebuilding that is earmarked for gender equality should be increased. The PBF has exceeded its initial 15% spending target on gender-related projects, achieving 40%. However, **it is currently unclear whether additional funding is required to implement the Seven-Point Action Plan**, as the PBF is not the sole source of funding for such work. *The participants stressed that the UN could conduct a thorough and urgent evaluation of the Seven-Point Action Plan to determine its effectiveness and impact, as well as determining whether additional resources are required.*

The participants noted that there is also a low accountability around the use of financial resources and an unwillingness to report failures and lessons learned for fear of jeopardizing donor relationships and funding for gender-related activities. *To increase accountability, the participants noted a need for improved reporting on achievements and lessons learned and for better evidence of what works. UN missions could also further increase their gender expertise, as well as capacities for gender analysis. The participants highlighted that organizations could be encouraged by donors to share details of failures and lessons learned as well as successes without fear that it will compromise resource mobilization and donor relations*

Finally, the public discourse tends to link women's participation in peacebuilding to better outcomes, such as increased effectiveness of peace agreements and greater sustainability of peace processes. This, however, forces women to justify their participation in peace processes, when in reality, it is their right. **There continue to exist few opportunities for women to participate in post-conflict politics**. Women continue to be excluded from leadership positions by political parties.

There also needs to more support to grassroots organizations without creating financial dependence. There is a clear role for the UN in facilitating discussion, opening space, and clearing obstacles to broad-based participation. In many cases, such as the Lucha movement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), organic, locally-led movements can bring clear benefits to peacebuilding efforts and should be supported, rather than co-opted, by international actors. Therefore, *the participants highlighted that UN agencies should further invest in facilitation, providing spaces and removing barriers to participation for grassroots civil society.*

Concluding Observations

Peacebuilding is predominantly a locally and nationally owned endeavor, often supported by international actors, including the United Nations. **The concept of sustaining peace requires the whole system to work together in all stages of peacebuilding.** This must involve collaboration not only with traditional and specialized peacebuilding organizations, but with a broader set of actors across the three pillars of the UN – human rights, peace and security, and development – as well as with the humanitarian and disarmament communities. The concept of sustaining peace needs to be further operationalized. To this end, **the capacities of human rights mechanisms that can help identify, address and resolve underlying causes of conflict, and thus prevent its outbreak or re-occurrence, need to be further leveraged.**

Sustaining peace entails all sectors of society and is not only the responsibility of the UNPBA or the UN system. Peacebuilding is more than a discrete set of interventions. It is an approach, a process-driven method and principled way of engaging and enabling local and national actors to convene and lead their own change processes, which enable them to deal with conflict non-violently.

Building peace after conflict through specific interventions is not enough. **Sustaining peace is a mindset and posture that seeks to prevent the outbreak of conflict in the first place.** The Consultations called for a context-sensitive and peace responsive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace that leverages all parts of society in support of building peace.

About the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a knowledge hub that connects the critical mass of peacebuilding actors, resources, and expertise in Geneva and worldwide. Founded in 2008, the Platform has a mandate to facilitate interaction on peacebuilding between different institutions and sectors and to advance new knowledge and understanding of issues and contexts related to building peace. It also plays a creative role in building bridges between International Geneva, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in New York, and peacebuilding activities in the field. The Platform provides policy-relevant advice and services, ensures the continuous exchange of information through seminars, consultations, and conferences, and facilitates outcome-oriented dialogues on peacebuilding practice. The Platform's flagship initiative is Geneva Peace Week that it organizes in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), and the Platform's five partners. The next edition of Geneva Peace Week is 2-6 November 2020. The Platform is a joint project of five institutions: the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Interpeace; the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) and the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva (QUNO).