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Operationalizing the Sustaining Peace Agenda: Lessons from Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea

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Executive Summary

The twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace adopted by the General Assembly and Security Council in 2016 made a breakthrough in the UN's conception of peacebuilding. Significant work has since been undertaken to reconfigure the UN system to work toward the implementation of these resolutions and the fulfillment of this vision. First and foremost, this has required reforms to revitalize the UN's peacebuilding architecture and enhance its synergies with all the pillars of the UN. Further, it has necessitated the revision of internal UN processes, which the secretary-general put forward in 2018 in a set of forty-two recommendations to implement the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions.

To inform the review of the peacebuilding architecture, this issue brief synthesizes findings related to the operationalization of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions at the country level in Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea. In all three countries, the reforms and recommendations are in the process of being implemented, albeit unevenly. Liberia was an early test case for the implementation of the recommendations, while Papua New Guinea has made significant advances, and Burkina Faso is moving forward with the reforms amid unfolding security and humanitarian crises.

Implementation can be assessed across four areas: (1) operational and policy coherence; (2) leadership, accountability, and capacity; (3) financing; and (4) partnerships. The reform of the resident coordinator's offices is one of the most concrete manifestations of improved operational and policy coherence, leadership, and accountability. Partnerships have been established or reinforced at all levels and across sectors, but partnerships with civil society organizations, local communities, and the private sector could be better systematized and better integrated into the UN way of working. The Peacebuilding Commission, along with the Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office, have backed up this country-level work with political and financial support, though funding remains inadequate.

To date, much of the focus has been on improving the effectiveness of how the UN delivers its mandates. To fully realize the vision of the sustaining peace agenda, its operationalization must increasingly focus on the impact of these efforts. This requires questioning and testing the theory of change underpinning these operational reforms to ensure the UN is effectively helping societies build the foundation for sustaining peace.

Introduction

The twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace adopted by the General Assembly and Security Council in 2016 define sustaining peace as both “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account.” It is envisioned as encompassing measures, including preventive ones, to be taken throughout all stages of conflict and in its aftermath.¹ It requires the UN to take a comprehensive, cross-pillar, inclusive approach and to closely coordinate with local actors and align its work with national priorities.²

To operationalize the sustaining peace resolutions, the secretary-general published a report in 2018 presenting forty-two recommendations across four areas: (1) operational and policy coherence; (2) leadership, accountability, and capacity; (3) financing; and (4) partnerships.³ These recommendations were issued amid ongoing reforms in three areas, which, in part, helped reinforce the peacebuilding architecture and operationalize the sustaining peace agenda. Reforms to the UN peace and security pillar, including through the merger of the Department of Political Affairs and of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to form the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, has aimed to mainstream sustaining peace across this pillar. The UN development system reform empowered UN resident coordinators (RCs) and put in place a “new generation” of UN country teams (UNCTs). Finally, the reform of the UN’s management paradigm aligned responsibility for mandate implementation with financial

authority.

As called for in the 2016 sustaining peace resolutions and again in 2018, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has launched a comprehensive review of the peacebuilding architecture, which will be completed by the end of 2020.⁴ This issue brief synthesizes findings on the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda at the country level in Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea to inform this review process.⁵ All three countries have been undergoing political shifts and have faced challenges that have posed risks to sustaining peace but differ widely in other respects, including the level of UN engagement.

At the time the study on Liberia was published (May 2019), the country was going through a transition. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) had left the country following the completion of its mandate in March 2018. A strengthened “next generation” UNCT was put in place in 2019 with an empowered RC, making it one of the first countries to implement the UN development system reform. The country also had a new administration under President George Weah, who was sworn in a year earlier. At the time, the country had also been weakened by the Ebola outbreak in 2014 and 2015. Liberia was one of the earliest test cases for the implementation of the secretary-general’s recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

At the time of the study on Papua New Guinea (September 2019), the country was facing a host of challenges, including a referendum on the future political status of Bougainville—the site of a ten-year civil war—and growing intercommunal

1 See preambular paragraph 12: “Recognizing that ‘sustaining peace,’ as drawn from the Advisory Group of Experts report, should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.” UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282 and UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262. See also: Youssef Mahmoud, Lesley Connolly, and Delphine Mechoulan, eds., “Sustaining Peace in Practice: Building on What Works,” International Peace Institute, February 2018; and other resources at <https://www.ipinst.org/tag/sustaining-peace>.

2. The three UN pillars are peace and security, development, and human rights.

3 UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, UN Doc. A/72/702-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018; UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, UN Doc. A/73/890-S/2019/448, May 30, 2019.

4 UN Security Council Resolution 2413 (April 26, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2413 and General Assembly Resolution 72/276 (April 26, 2018), UN Doc. A/RES/72/276 (2018); UN General Assembly, “Letter to the President of the General Assembly by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission: Proposal for Suggested Terms of Reference,” October 7, 2019.

5 The International Peace Institute conducted these three case studies between 2018 and 2020. The first two were undertaken in collaboration with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities?” International Peace Institute, May 2019; Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea: Prevention in Practice,” International Peace Institute, September 2019; and Christian Lara and Gabriel Delsol, “Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso: Responding to an Emerging Crisis,” International Peace Institute, May 2020.

violence in the Highlands region. Although Papua New Guinea is not currently on the agenda of the UN Security Council, it has hosted two successive special political missions from 1998 to 2007. The UN's main aim in the country was to accompany the implementation of the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement. The UN was also involved in coordinating a humanitarian response to a magnitude-7.5 earthquake that struck the Highlands in 2018. Following the withdrawal of the UN mission in Bougainville in 2007, the UN has remained engaged in the region through the operational activities of the UNCT.

The study on Burkina Faso took place in late 2019 and early 2020, as the security situation in the country's Sahel region was rapidly deteriorating. Persistent attacks by armed groups designated as terrorists by the UN Security Council and intercommunal violence, particularly in the northern and eastern provinces, have undermined the country's stability. This deteriorating security situation has led to an increasing number of internally displaced persons in need of humanitarian assistance. With elections scheduled for November 2020, the country's political stability may also be at risk. In response to the unfolding crisis, the UN has strengthened the humanitarian and peacebuilding capacities of the UNCT without changing the UN's mandate in the country.

This issue brief focuses on three dimensions that exemplify the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda in Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea. First, it considers the reforms of the resident coordinator's offices (RCOs), one of the most concrete manifestations of the secretary-general's recommendations to improve operational and policy coherence, leadership, and accountability. It also examines the role of the RC in leading the UN's implementation of the sustaining peace agenda in partnership with national authorities, and other external partners. Second, it focuses on

the political and financial support provided by UN headquarters, focusing on the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in enhancing visibility and of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in mobilizing resources. Finally, it looks at multi-level partnerships, including with national and regional partners and civil society.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, it will put further stress on fragile contexts and may impact peacebuilding efforts, including local peacebuilding activities.⁶ This will put the UN peacebuilding architecture to the test as peacebuilding actors try to contribute to the crisis response while advocating to keep attention on the sustaining peace agenda.

Operational and Policy Coherence: The Centrality of the Resident Coordinator's Office

In Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea, the restructuring of the resident coordinator's office (RCO) as part of the UN development system reform has been at the core of the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda.⁷ Following this reform, the RCO has taken the lead in orchestrating policy coherence across the UNCT.⁸ The RC is tasked with promoting a common vision of sustaining peace, mutually reinforced by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and for ensuring that this vision aligns with and supports national priorities.⁹ The RCO in each country is guided by that country's UN sustainable development cooperation framework (or "cooperation framework," previously the UN development assistance framework), which serves as the go-to document for all UN agencies, funds, and programs in the country and seals the partnership between the UN and the government.¹⁰ In all three

6 Liliana Giffen, "COVID-19 and the Impact on Local Peacebuilding," *Conductive Space for Peace*, Humanity United, and Peace Direct, April 2020.

7 IPI, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, and Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, "Event Four Meeting Note: The UN Development System Reform and Sustaining Peace: Realities and Opportunities," May 2019.

8 The UNCT is comprised of the heads of all the UN agencies, funds, and programs represented at the country level and also sometimes of specialized agencies.

9 UN Development Coordination Office, "2020 Report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office," May 2020.

10 "General Assembly resolution 72/279 elevates the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (now renamed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) as 'the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).'" UN Sustainable Development Group, "United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance," June 2019.

countries, the structural reform of the RCO and the UNCT have been put in place. This has reportedly increased communication and coordination between the RCO and UNCT and enabled them to structurally align their work plans with national priorities. However, it is too early to assess whether these operational reforms have enhanced sustaining peace on the ground.

Aligning UN Efforts with National Priorities

A key dimension of the sustaining peace agenda is that the UN should reinforce and complement government efforts by aligning its funding and activities with national goals and priorities. To this end, the sustainable development cooperation framework is meant to be developed, implemented, monitored, and reported on jointly by the government and the UNCT and anchored in national development priorities and planning cycles.¹¹

The operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda has empowered resident coordinators to enhance policy coherence and program coordination across the UN system and to align with national priorities and the SDGs.

In all three countries discussed in this paper, the national governments and RCOs have taken steps to jointly develop and implement the cooperation framework. The cooperation frameworks closely align with national development plans and priorities. In the case of Burkina Faso, the cooperation framework was extended to the end of 2021 to align with the government's next planning cycle. In all three cases, joint steering committees have overseen the implementation of the cooperation frameworks, often through sub-committees or interagency working groups for each of the framework's outcomes.¹²

Enhancing Coherence of UN Efforts at the Country Level

In Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea, the development system reform has further enhanced opportunities for UN agencies, funds, and programs to integrate their activities, better communicate with one another, and advance as "One UN." One such opportunity is the common country analysis (CCA).¹³ CCAs, which involve all UN entities at the country level, aim to lay out the major risks and opportunities and identify the UN's comparative advantage in supporting national plans. Although CCAs were initially intended to inform development work, the secretary-general has also encouraged using them for analyzing the drivers of crises and identifying areas for peacebuilding support.¹⁴

The cooperation frameworks for Papua New Guinea (2018–2022), Liberia (2020–2024), and Burkina Faso (2018–2021) were all built on CCAs.¹⁵ These common planning and implementation roadmaps aim to enhance operational and policy coherence and interagency planning within the UN in each country and to yield common results.¹⁶ The frameworks' four pillars also align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; see Table 1).

In all three countries, the shift to CCAs and cooperation frameworks has reportedly enhanced senior-level coordination on programming and increased policy coherence. However, it is too early to determine whether it has led UN agencies, funds, and programs to further integrate their program-

11 Ibid.

12 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea," p. 4; Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia," p. 5; Written communication from representative of the RCO in Burkina Faso, April 2020.

13 UN Sustainable Development Group, "United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance," June 2019.

14 Office of the UN Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 6.

15 Papua New Guinea's UN development assistance framework (2018–2022), though not technically renamed a "cooperation framework," has essentially gone through the same process used for developing a cooperation framework; Liberia's cooperation framework (2020–2024) uses the names "UNDAF" and "Cooperation Framework" interchangeably; and Burkina Faso's current UNDAF has been extended to the end of 2021 to align with the government's planning cycle, and will transition to a cooperation framework in early 2022.

16 UN Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 6.

Table 1. Links between the cooperation frameworks' pillars and the SDGs in Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso

Sustainable Development Goals¹⁷	Liberia Cooperation Framework (2020-2024)	Papua New Guinea Cooperation Framework (2018-2022)	Burkina Faso Cooperation Framework (2018-2022)
SDG 1. No poverty SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth SDG 10. Reduced inequalities	“Economy and jobs”	“Prosperity”	“Eradication of multi-dimensional poverty”
SDG 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	“Sustaining the peace”	“Peace”	
SDG 2. Zero hunger SDG 3. Good health and well being SDG 4. Quality education SDG 5. Gender equality SDG 6. Clean water and sanitation SDG 8. Economic growth SDG 10. Reduced inequalities	“Human development”	“People”	“Population’s resiliency and creating sustainable agricultural conditions with the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition”
SDG 13. Climate action SDG 14. Life below water SDG 15. Life on land		“Planet”	“Preventing climate risks”
SDG 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	“Governance and transparency”		“Reinforcing the efficacy of institutions, including ensuring equal access to justice and promoting rule of law”

ming in practice. Each UN agency, fund, and program develops its own work plan and risk analysis and is not mandated to report to the RCO. Nonetheless, each has revised its strategy to align with the host country’s national priorities and the cooperation framework.¹⁸ It is unclear whether this alignment is sufficient to spur further integration of

programming or if mandatory reporting to the RCO would be necessary.

The RC seems to play a vital role in fostering coherence. The “impartial, independent and empowered resident coordinator,” a key pillar of the UN development system reform, is expected to catalyze the operationalization of sustaining peace

¹⁷ This list of SDGs is not exhaustive. The table aims to broadly highlight how the UN sustainable development cooperation frameworks draw on the SDGs and to underscore some similarities between the three UN frameworks.

¹⁸ Connolly and Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Liberia,” p. 5.

among all relevant stakeholders.¹⁹ RCs are in charge of leading the implementation of the cooperation frameworks and reporting on progress to the secretary-general and host governments. The selection of each RC is therefore critical. Suitability for the position often comes down to personalities, past experience in the UN, and social capital. For instance, the RC in Papua New Guinea's past experience at UN headquarters gave him a strong understanding of the UN's prevention and peacebuilding tools and financing structures, preparing him to be involved in the development of project proposals.

The resident coordinator's office (RCO) supports the RC by serving as a hub for policy coordination, partnerships, and information sharing across the UN and with external partners. RCOs' core teams have been enlarged to include five additional positions with specialized skills and expertise: a strategic planner or team leader, an economist, a finance and partnerships adviser, a data and results management adviser, and a communication and advocacy adviser.²⁰ Following the 2018 recommendations of the secretary-general, the RCOs in Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Burkina Faso, and many other countries have also brought on a peace and development adviser.²¹ This adviser is responsible for looking at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and enhancing UN support to national stakeholders on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Additionally, some RCOs have integrated specialized officers, such as a gender adviser in Liberia and a human rights adviser in Burkina Faso.²²

While appropriate staffing is critical to the implementation of the UN development system reform, RCOs have sometimes struggled to obtain adequate resources. For instance, because of a lack

of sustainable funding, the RCO in Liberia has had to rely on ad hoc funding from individual donors to fill core positions.²³ In Burkina Faso, the decentralization of the UNCT through five integrated regional hubs has suffered from staff shortages. It has therefore prioritized the recruitment and deployment of humanitarian staff over staff in other areas.

Beyond structural changes, the RCs in these countries have taken ad hoc initiatives to multiply communication channels and enhance coordination with UNCTs. In Liberia, for example, the RCO shares the RC's daily schedule with all agencies, funds, and programs, as well as a weekly analysis of key developments and risks in the country.²⁴ In Papua New Guinea, the RCO holds a bimonthly coordination meeting with the heads of agencies and other staff and encourages various UN agencies to provide input into its peace and political analysis reports.

The UN has also collocated its offices and its partners' offices to enhance collaboration and reduce transactional costs. In Liberia, for example, the UNCT has been consolidated into one complex in Monrovia to share resources and simplify logistics. In Papua New Guinea, the UNCT is working to collocate all UN entities based in Port Moresby.²⁵ In Burkina Faso, UN offices are collocated in the five integrated regional hubs while remaining only partially collocated in the capital.²⁶

As per the secretary-general's recommendations, the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda has empowered RCs to enhance policy coherence and program coordination across the UN system and to align with national priorities and the SDGs. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

19 UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, pp. 6 and 9; "The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) plays an enhanced leadership role throughout the Cooperation Framework process, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279 and the new Management and Accountability Framework (MAF)." UN Sustainable Development Group. "United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework," June 2019, p. 5.

20 Written communication with representative of UN Development Coordination Office in New York.

21 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 5; UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Peace and Development Advisors—Joint UNDP-DDPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention."

22 Interview with UN representatives in New York.

23 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia."

24 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

25 All UN entities are now located in Port Moresby, except for the World Health Organization office, which is located in a government building.

26 In Ouagadougou, the UN is only partially collocated due to space limitations. Written exchange with representative of Burkina Faso's RCO, April 2020.

Affairs, and the secretary-general have all called on RCOs and UNCTs to drive the UN response at the country level.²⁷ This crisis will test RCOs around the world, which have suffered from understaffing and lack experience with the new coordination channels and procedures. While their work on the COVID-19 response could ultimately accelerate efforts to operationalize sustaining peace, it could also bring to light additional gaps.

Support for Sustaining Peace from UN Headquarters

In his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the secretary-general recommended reinforcing the peacebuilding architecture, establishing reporting lines that maintain dialogue between the field and UN headquarters, and ensuring that individual countries receive sufficient attention in New York. This strengthening of the peacebuilding architecture has helped better address the immediate peacebuilding needs of Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso by enhancing the visibility of these countries at UN headquarters.

For states not on the UN Security Council's Agenda, the Peacebuilding Commission has been a particularly important platform for raising and sustaining international attention.

integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery.”²⁸ Through its unique membership, it builds bridges between different parts of the UN system and with external stakeholders.²⁹ The PBC also spurs policy dialogue, shares information, provides recommendations for galvanizing and improving coordination, and provides a platform to “marshal resources” and “ensure predictable financing to peacebuilding.”³⁰

For states not on the UN Security Council's agenda, such as Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso, the PBC has been a particularly important platform for raising and sustaining international attention.³¹ The PBC has also demonstrated increasing flexibility to address situations that are not on its formal agenda. For example, neither Papua New Guinea nor Burkina Faso has a specific

configuration at the PBC, but both have been discussed at the PBC in the past year.³² For all three countries, these discussions have brought international attention and political support during politically sensitive times, such as the drawdown of UNMIL in Liberia, the Bougainville referendum in Papua New

Guinea, and the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso.

Political Support from UN Headquarters: The Peacebuilding Commission

The PBC is the “dedicated institutional mechanism” for gathering “all relevant actors’ to mobilize resources, sustain attention and propose

The PBC has been particularly instrumental in helping these countries prepare for transitions and in sustaining political cohesion among stakeholders during these periods. In Liberia, the PBC held regular meetings over a two-year period in anticipation of UNMIL's withdrawal, facilitating the development of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan

27 World Health Organization, “COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan,” February 2020; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Global Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19,” March 2020; UN, “The Secretary-General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund,” April 2020, available at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_response_and_recovery_fund_fact_sheet.pdf.

28 UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (December 20, 2005), UN Doc. S/RES/1645; UN General Assembly Resolution 60/180 (December 30, 2005), UN Doc. A/RES/60/180; UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/20, December 18, 2018; Youssef Mahmoud and Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, “With New Resolutions, Sustaining Peace Sits at Heart of UN Architecture,” *IPI Global Observatory*, April 29, 2016.

29 “The PBC is composed by 31 Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council. The top financial contributing countries and the top troop contributing countries to the United Nations system are also members.” United Nations, “United Nations Peacebuilding Commission,” available at <http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/commission>. See also: IPI and GPPAC, “Sustaining Peace in Practice: Lessons Learned from Liberia and Papua New Guinea,” March 17, 2020.

30 United Nations, “Peacebuilding Commission,” available at <http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/commission/mandate>.

31 The Security Council presidential statement emphasized the complementary role the PBC plays vis-à-vis the Security Council, including by bringing in civil society and addressing issues that may not rise to the level of “threats to international peace and security.” UN Security Council, “Statement by the President of the Security Council,” UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/20, December 18, 2018.

32 United Nations, “Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its Thirteenth Session,” January 2020, available at <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/report-peacebuilding-commission-its-thirteenth-session>.

and supporting the transition to the UNCT.³³ In October 2019, the PBC provided a platform to the national governments of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to prepare for the referendum and its aftermath.³⁴ In Burkina Faso, the PBC has been instrumental in solidifying international political support to the government as it revises its national priorities in light of the deteriorating security situation; the PBC held three meetings on Burkina Faso over the past year, with the meeting in March 2020 giving the government the opportunity to unveil its list of national priorities.³⁵ In all three cases, the PBC has helped support national priorities and sustain political buy-in.

The PBC has also aided in sustaining international attention beyond these transition phases. For instance, it recently held a discussion on Papua New Guinea, following the visit of the deputy secretary-general to the country in March 2020.³⁶ The PBC's Liberia configuration has also remained engaged with Liberia's government and other actors in the country in support of national dialogue to mitigate economic tensions and sustain social cohesion after UNMIL's withdrawal.³⁷

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PBC convened a virtual meeting on the impact of the pandemic on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and it held the first country-specific discussion on the socioeconomic implications of COVID-19 on Liberia.³⁸ It has followed this

with meetings on West Africa and the Sahel, Papua New Guinea, and other contexts.³⁹ This shows that the PBC could be well-positioned to convene similar discussions on other issues it has previously left aside, such as the role of climate change in exacerbating conflict.⁴⁰ Advancing this issue would further reinforce the PBC's synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 13 on climate change.⁴¹ A discussion on this topic would also align with the national priorities of some countries, as reflected in the cooperation frameworks for Burkina Faso and Papua New Guinea, which include "planet" as one of their four pillars.

Financial Support from UN Headquarters

In his 2018 report, the secretary-general recommended "increasing, restructuring and better prioritizing funding dedicated to United Nations peacebuilding activities."⁴² However, he noted in his 2019 interim report that out of all of his recommendations, those related to funding have seen the least progress.⁴³ In Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso, financial support for peacebuilding activities has remained insufficient, ad hoc, and inflexible, and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic risk further weakening funding for peacebuilding.

RCs have three "principal funding mechanisms to draw upon in support of the humanitarian,

33 See: Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," International Peace Institute, December 2018.

34 UN Peacebuilding Commission, "Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Papua New Guinea: Chair's Summary," October 10, 2019, available at <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/pbc-papua-new-guinea-chairs-summary-ambassadorial-level-meeting-29-october-2019>.

35 The PBC held meetings on Burkina Faso on May 16, 2019; September 26, 2019; and March 5, 2020. UN Peacebuilding Commission, "Concept Note: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso," March 2020, available at [https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/upload.teamup.com/908040/N8Cw8GxQQZmjN5Rd628T_PBC-BF-5March-Concept Note \(002\).pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/upload.teamup.com/908040/N8Cw8GxQQZmjN5Rd628T_PBC-BF-5March-Concept Note (002).pdf).

36 United Nations Secretary-General, "Deputy Secretary-General's Remarks to the Peacebuilding Commission on Joint Mission to Papua New Guinea," May 12, 2020, available at <http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-05-12/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-the-peacebuilding-commission-joint-mission-papua-new-guinea-prepared-for-delivery>.

37 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its Thirteenth Session*, UN Doc. A/74/668-S/2020/80, January 29, 2020.

38 UN Peacebuilding Commission, "Press Release by the Peacebuilding Commission on the Impact of COVID-19 on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, April 8, 2020; UN, "Meeting of the PBC Liberia Configuration, April 15, 2020, available at <http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/peacebuilding-commission-virtual-meetings>.

39 United Nations, "Virtual Meetings," available at <http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/peacebuilding-commission-virtual-meetings>.

40 Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate-Fragility Policy Paper: Climate Change in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Fund," February 2020.

41 UN, "Goal 13: Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impact," available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>.

42 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/73/890-S/2019/448, May 30, 2019, p. 9.

43 For example, in the case of Liberia, the transfer of unspent assessed contributions from the peacekeeping budget to the PBF upon the mission's withdrawal might have been beneficial but faced opposition from some member states.

development and peacebuilding work” of UNCTs: the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Sustainable Development Goals Fund, and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).⁴⁴ CERF provides funds for life-saving humanitarian aid, primarily in the most underfunded contexts,⁴⁵ and the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund (which replaced the Sustainable Development Goals Fund) supports countries “to accelerate their progress towards the SDGs.”⁴⁶ The PBF is a fund of primary resort for countries on the agenda of the PBC or that have been declared eligible by the secretary-general. It can finance projects by both the UN and civil society at the country level (see Table 2 for details on these funding streams in Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Papua New Guinea).⁴⁷

The PBF remains the main source of financing for peacebuilding activities.⁴⁸ It addresses immediate needs, as in Burkina Faso, which was granted eligibility for funding in 2018. It also bridges financial gaps, as it did during Liberia’s transition. One limitation of the PBF, however, is that all its contributions must be earmarked. This limits the ability of recipients to adapt their peacebuilding activities to changing situations, which becomes particularly problematic during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic if no decision is made to recalibrate the distribution of funding.⁴⁹

To further mobilize funding, particularly for underfunded areas, Liberia and Papua New Guinea

have established multi-donor trust funds: the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund (LMPTF) in 2018,⁵⁰ and the UN Papua New Guinea Country Fund in 2009.⁵¹ These funds, which are both managed by joint UN-government steering committees, allow donors to allocate additional funding to the UN system and national entities, including CSOs, in a coordinated and predictable fashion. They thus serve as platforms for channeling non-core contributions and capture these contributions in a common budgetary framework.

In Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso, financial support for peacebuilding activities has remained insufficient, ad hoc, and inflexible.

The LMPTF and Papua New Guinea Country Fund allow “bilateral and multilateral development partners, private sector, foundations, and non-governmental organizations” to contribute.⁵² Their success in bringing such a diverse set of donors has varied, however.

Over the last decade, the Papua New Guinea Country Fund has secured about \$120 million, including from member states, the PBF, other UN funds, non-profits, and the private sector. Unfortunately, this diverse donor base has faded away over the years; by 2020, Australia was the only contributor.⁵³ Likewise, the PBF has been the only contributor to the LMPTF,⁵⁴ with a total commitment of around \$10 million for the period 2019–2021.⁵⁵ Despite the secretary-general’s recommendation to focus “on inter-agency pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds,” these two funds have not raised sufficient money to cover all the

44 Ibid.

45 UN OCHA “CERF Results Report, 2019 Edition,” June 2019, available at https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF_Results_2019_edition_1.pdf.

46 Joint SDG Fund Website, available at <https://jointsdgifund.org>.

47 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “The Peacebuilding Fund: Trust Fund Factsheet,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000>.

48 UN, “Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund: 2020–2024 Strategy,” March 2020, available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_strategy_2020-2024_final.pdf.

49 Amy Lieberman, “A Look at How UN Development Funds Are Recalibrating SDG Funding,” Devex, April 28, 2020.

50 UN Liberia, “Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund Terms of Reference,” available at <https://liberia.un.org/en/23620-liberia-transition-multi-partner-trust-fund-terms-reference>.

51 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Papua New Guinea UN Country Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PG100>.

52 UN Liberia, “Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund Terms of Reference,” available at <https://liberia.un.org/en/23620-liberia-transition-multi-partner-trust-fund-terms-reference>, p. 17; UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Papua New Guinea UN Country Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PG100>.

53 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Papua New Guinea UN Country Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PG100>.

54 At the time of publication, negotiations were ongoing to secure funding for Liberia beyond the PBF.

55 UN General Assembly, *Peacebuilding Fund: Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc A/74/688, February 10, 2020; UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Now is the Time to Support Liberia,” December 11, 2019, available at <http://mptf.undp.org/general/news/211>; UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/4LR00>.

Table 2. Support from UN pooled funding mechanisms for Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso in 2020⁵⁶

	Liberia	Papua New Guinea	Burkina Faso
Central Emergency Response Fund⁵⁷	\$0	\$0	\$10,005,433
The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund⁵⁸	\$0	\$0	\$0
Peacebuilding Fund⁵⁹	\$5,976,523 ⁶⁰	\$0	\$4,348,871
Total for 2020	\$5,976,523	\$0	\$14,354,314

activities they had planned.⁶¹ Looking ahead, it will be important to understand and correct why these funding mechanisms are not attractive to external donors, which may prefer engaging directly with governments to support their national plan.

Multi-Level Partnerships: An Ecosystem to Sustain Peace

Recognizing that UN efforts should support national and local efforts at sustaining peace also requires “a recognition that the United Nations may not always be the leading actor” in these efforts.⁶² As the representative of the UN system in a country, the RC is expected to leverage the UN’s partnerships at all levels, sometimes as a leader and other times as a follower. First and foremost, RCOs work in tandem with national authorities to

implement the sustainable development cooperation framework. They are also supposed to work closely with CSOs, engage with communities, and coordinate with subregional, regional, and international organizations, international financial institutions, and the private sector.

Some of these partnerships, such as those with local communities or those facilitated by the PBC with external partners, may be direct results of the secretary-general’s recommendations on strengthening operational partnership. Other partnerships were consolidated and established prior to 2018, including the 2017 Joint UN–African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which includes “preventing and mediating conflict and sustaining peace” as one of its four “essential themes.”⁶³ Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso all demonstrate that there has been progress on all the secretary-general’s recommendations on partnerships.

⁵⁶ As of April 2020.

⁵⁷ Central Emergency Response Fund, “Allocations by Country, 2020,” available at <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country>.

⁵⁸ UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Joint SDG Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/IPS00>.

⁵⁹ PBF contributions are made on a project basis, not a yearly basis. Therefore, the amount displayed in the table reflects the amount contributed by the PBF in 2020 and not the total contributions, including previous ones, for projects implemented in 2020. See also: UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: The Peacebuilding Fund,” available at <http://www.mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000>. The PBF has not committed any funding to Papua New Guinea in 2020. However, from 2015 to 2018, Papua New Guinea “has received a total of \$16.6 million in PBF contributions for ten projects... two focusing on the referendum and peacebuilding priorities in Bougainville.” More recently, one of these projects focuses on sustaining peace in the Highlands. Since the PBF’s contributions are project-based, this funding will continue to feed into 2020. Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea,” p. 14; Written communication with PBSO representative in New York, April 2020.

⁶⁰ This amount is channeled through the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

⁶¹ UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/73/890–S/2019/448, May 30, 2019, p. 10. The approved budget is higher than the net funded amount, in both cases. See: UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Papua New Guinea UN Country Fund”; and UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Factsheet: Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund.”

⁶² GPPAC and IPI, “Sustaining Peace in Practice: Lessons Learned from Liberia and Papua New Guinea,” February 2020, p. 1.

⁶³ See: Daniel Forti and Priyal Singh, “Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management,” International Peace Institute and Institute for Security Studies, October 2019.

However, work with CSOs, engagement with communities, and partnerships with the private sector still require further improvement.

National Partners: From Government Authorities to Local Communities

Just as the UN works to support government priorities, governments are also the UN's primary implementing partners and often the first beneficiary of its activities. In Papua New Guinea, for example, the UN provided "technical advice and financial assistance to both national and Bougainvillean institutions (their electoral bodies, their parliaments, and the Bougainville Referendum Commission)."⁶⁴ In Liberia, the UN supported the authorities "to establish and run the Peacebuilding Office in the Ministry of Internal Affairs."⁶⁵ This type of cooperation is not new and does not stem from the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda; it is rather the UN's traditional way of working with member states.

A novelty of the twin resolutions on sustaining peace, however, is the importance of including all segments of society in defining the goal and process of sustaining peace.⁶⁶ In Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso, the UN has relied on CSOs to engage with local communities, particularly in remote and rural areas where the government is less present. In Liberia, the UN has partnered with CSOs to ensure continuous engagement at the local level after UNMIL's departure from the country. For example, UN agencies, funds, and programs and the PBF "have funded CSOs to establish multi-stakeholder platforms in three hotspots to bring together communities and concession companies to resolve land disputes peacefully."⁶⁷ In Burkina Faso, the UNCT works with CSOs to promote

social cohesion among key demographic groups, including youth.

The UN has also engaged directly with local communities, mostly through agencies and programs. Following the earthquake that struck the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea in 2018, the RCO created a Community Engagement Working Group that developed a Community Response Map, with the RCO coordinating outreach to local communities from the top-down. This led to the implementation of additional UN-supported activities targeting local communities.

However, cooperation with CSOs is not systematic or well-integrated into the UN's way of working. These partnerships depend on factors including the UN's knowledge of existing CSOs and their accessibility, particularly in contexts where insecurity prevails. Further, the large number of UN entities with mandates often perceived as overlapping, the UN's bureaucratic processes and onerous funding requirements, and frequent turnover among UN staff might prevent CSOs from accessing funding. The UN's ad hoc, earmarked contributions are particularly challenging for local peacebuilding organizations to manage, particularly in emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as they make it hard to adapt programs without a formal recalibration of funding.

More broadly, the secretary-general has called on the UN system to improve its engagement with civil society at the local level.⁶⁸ To implement this recommendation, a joint UN-Civil Society Working Group has developed UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (UNCEG). The guidelines, expected to be published later in 2020, "offer several recommendations for the UN to more effectively engage with communities and

Cooperation with civil society organizations is not systematic or well-integrated into the UN's way of working.

64 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea," p. 6.

65 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia," p. 10.

66 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282, para. 3.

67 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia," pp. 12–13.

68 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018.

local civil society actors in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.”⁶⁹ They present an opportunity for UNCTs to strengthen their engagement with civil society actors in a coherent and respectful manner, get a deeper understanding of local contexts, and ensure their efforts are complementary.

Subregional, Regional, International, and Private Sector Partnerships

The secretary-general has encouraged “system-wide engagement with regional and subregional organizations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a focus on regular dialogue, enhanced information sharing, improved coordination, and joint approaches and activities, on the basis of comparative advantages.”⁷⁰ This regional engagement begins within the UN system, with UN regional entities feeding into the implementation of the sustaining peace agenda at the country level. For instance, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) supported the implementation of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan and the 2017 national elections.⁷¹ UNOWAS also advised the secretary-general on options for accelerating the operationalization of the sustaining peace agenda in Burkina Faso.⁷² In Papua New Guinea, the East Asia and the Pacific Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations has supported the efforts of the UNCT.⁷³

Outside of the UN system, engagement with other multilateral organizations has varied considerably by region.⁷⁴ The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been key partners in operationalizing the sustaining peace agenda in Liberia and Burkina Faso. In the case of Liberia, following

UNMIL’s withdrawal, the UN had to reinforce partnerships with multilateral organizations to bridge programming gaps. ECOWAS and the AU also helped coordinate and engage with the UN, with the goal of regional organizations increasingly taking the lead.

Likewise, in Burkina Faso, the UN operates alongside numerous regional, subregional, and international actors, including the AU and ECOWAS. These organizations have different mandates, ranging from political stabilization and security to development, making coordination necessary. The current situation in Burkina Faso cannot be understood without the regional lens. At the regional level, the Sahel is the beneficiary of multiple international programs and transnational initiatives, including the Sahel Alliance and the G5 Sahel. It has thus become increasingly important for these actors to coordinate with the UN to avoid duplicating their efforts, including through the Sahel Alliance’s pooled fund and the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and Support Plan.

Papua New Guinea is less saturated with multilateral organizations, relative to Liberia and Burkina Faso. Nonetheless, it has similarly been important for the RCO to leverage the mandates, outreach, and activities of multilateral organizations, including with the Spotlight Initiative, a large-scale European Union–UN regional partnership to eliminate violence against women and girls.⁷⁵

The governments of Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Burkina Faso have also established partnerships with specialized agencies of the UN, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as with regional development banks such as the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank, to implement and fund their national development plans. These multilateral partnerships, when they include the

69 United Nations, “UN System-Wide Community-Engagement Guidelines (UNCEG): Good Practices, Lessons Learned and Recommendations,” forthcoming.

70 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 16.

71 Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, “The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia’s Peacekeeping Transition,” International Peace Institute, December 2018.

72 Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, “Report of the Mission to Burkina Faso to Assess UN Engagement in the Country,” February 2019. See: Lara and Delsol, “Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso.”

73 Connolly and Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea,” p. 13.

74 See, for example: Amanda Lucey and Liezelle Kumalo, “Partnerships and Sustaining Peace, Insight from the Work of Regional Organizations,” *IPI Global Observatory*, June 11, 2018.

75 Connolly and Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea,” p. 5; UN Papua New Guinea, “United Nations Development Assistance Framework, 2018–2022,” p. 75. See as well: Spotlight Initiative, available at <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/>.

UN, have often been facilitated by the PBC. The Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment of Burkina Faso is one illustrative example of such a partnership. This assessment was undertaken by the African Development Bank, European Union, UN, and World Bank, at the request of the Burkinabe government, in June 2019. Following a scoping mission, the partners laid out priority areas for investment, which allowed them to adjust and reallocate their aid accordingly.⁷⁶ This assessment will also inform the next cooperation framework for Burkina Faso.

Since the secretary-general has encouraged closely linking the sustaining peace agenda with the 2030 Agenda, it has been important for RCOs and UNCTs to coordinate with these financial and development partners, which each have different governing bodies and reporting structures. To ensure coherence, these stakeholders have usually committed to align their efforts with national priorities. The World Bank's partnership with Liberia, for example, clearly articulated its support to Liberia's national plan, the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development.⁷⁷

Beyond these overarching frameworks, RCs have established country-level fora to maintain regular communication with development and financial partners. This has been particularly important to get a cross-agency overview of activities in each country and facilitate closer linkage between the SDGs and the sustaining peace agenda. In Liberia, the RC held a weekly meeting with international development and financial partners. Liberia also had a "development coordination group co-chaired in rotation by the World Bank and US Agency for International Development (USAID) and joined by the government on an ad hoc basis, which meets monthly for joint-strategic planning."⁷⁸ In Papua New Guinea, "the UN and government co-chair a Development Partners Round Table that meets on a semi-regular basis." The UN also includes the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in its security management team meetings and regularly

engages in dialogue with both organizations.⁷⁹

The private sector is another potential partner for the UN. In Papua New Guinea, the UN has partnered with the private sector to implement humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding projects in the Highlands. However, there have been fewer examples of this type of partnership in Liberia and Burkina Faso. To encourage more private sector partnerships, the PBC has explicitly added into its 2020 workplan the need to "explore opportunities for engagement with the private sector in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace priorities."⁸⁰

Conclusion

Since the adoption of the dual resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in 2016, the UN has sought to reorient its work toward this vision. Operationalizing the sustaining peace agenda has required revitalizing the peacebuilding architecture and enhancing its synergies with all the UN's streams of work. Toward this end, the secretary-general put forward forty-two recommendations for implementing the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions, which in part aimed at ensuring that the sustaining peace agenda and the 2030 Agenda are mutually reinforcing.

The recommendations have been initiated and are in the process of being implemented at the country level, if unevenly. Based on this paper's findings on the progress of operationalizing the secretary-general's 2018 recommendations, the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture will need to focus on improving long-term funding tracks and implementing good practices for engaging with local peacebuilders.

It also remains an open question whether these efforts are having an impact on prospects for lasting peace. Operationalizing the sustaining peace agenda should focus not only on improving the effectiveness of the UN's tools for delivering

76 Government of Burkina Faso, "Programme d'urgence pour le Sahel au Burkina Faso: Matrice d'actions prioritaires du PUS-BF 2020–2021," February 2020.

77 World Bank Group, "Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Liberia for the Period FY19-FY24," Report No. 130753-LR, October 2018.

78 Connolly and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia," p. 17.

79 Connolly, and Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea," p. 15.

80 UN Peacebuilding Commission, "Provisional Annual Workplan of the Peacebuilding Commission: 2020."

programs but also on their impact. Existing efforts seem wedded to the notion that improving the effectiveness of these delivery tools will create a firmer foundation for sustaining peace. It is necessary to question and evaluate the theory of change underpinning these operational reforms. There should also be more focus on the ability of the UN system to bring about sustaining peace in a country or region—that is, to ensure the “prevention of outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict.”⁸¹

To this end, the outcome document of the review of the peacebuilding architecture could recommend identifying and fostering the conditions associated with the successful prevention of conflict. This involves taking peace (rather than conflict) as the starting point for analysis.⁸² The PBC, for instance, could convene a series of dialogues on sources of resilience in peaceful countries experiencing vulnerabilities instead of focusing on the “root causes of conflict.” Likewise, common country analyses could analyze drivers of and capacities for peace, and these could be captured in sustainable development cooperation frameworks, to ensure that effort and resources are deployed to support them.

Operationalizing the sustaining peace agenda should focus not only on improving the effectiveness of the UN’s tools for delivering programs but also on their impact on prospects for lasting peace.

The COVID-19 pandemic will test the ability of the peacebuilding architecture and its newly empowered structures and procedures to show flexibility to respond to a crisis. The PBC, which has convened several meetings on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, should use its bridging role to focus international attention on the interrelationship between the different dimensions of the pandemic. This would support efforts to advocate in favor of peacebuilding efforts at a time when donors’ attention may be shifting away. The review of the peacebuilding architecture also presents an opportunity for the secretary-general and UN Secretariat to sustain international attention on the need to continue supporting peacebuilding activities and ensure that the pandemic does not exacerbate tensions or the root causes of conflicts.

As the review of the peacebuilding architecture is under way, the UN and its member states should not forget the vision that drove them to adopt the sustaining peace resolutions: to live up to the UN’s *raison d’être* “to sustain peace in all its dimensions.”⁸³

81 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

82 Mahmoud, Connolly, and Mechoulam, eds. “Sustaining Peace in Practice”; Institute for Economics and Peace, “Positive Peace: The Lens to Achieve the Sustaining Peace Agenda,” May 2017.

83 United Nations, “The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group for the 2015 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture,” June 2015.

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