

Looking Ahead to the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review: Exploring Innovative Approaches to assess the Implementation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Hybrid roundtable | 16 May 2024

Summary Note

The 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) is mandated by the 2020 dual resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/75/201) and the Security Council (S/RES/2558) as a “comprehensive review” (OP5). These resolutions also request the UN Secretary-General to produce a “detailed report in 2024 in advance of the review” (OP 5). These calls create an expectation that the 2025 PBAR will build on the findings of the 2020 Review¹, as well as the developments in the UN Peacebuilding Architecture since then (i.e., the General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/76/305) on Financing for Peacebuilding, the 5th Anniversary of the Pathways for Peace Report, the launch of the Impact Hub, and ongoing implementation of the UN reforms). The timeline identified in the resolutions suggests that a strategic approach to the process requires action in 2024 to adequately inform the 2025 PBAR process from the outset.

In light of the recent adoption of the 2025 PBAR’s Terms of Reference by the UN General Assembly, this roundtable brought together Member States, UN partners and civil society peacebuilding experts to explore innovative options for and approaches to carrying out the 2025 PBAR. Participants took stock of lessons learned from previous PBARs and other relevant processes on both substance and the process itself. They reflected on relevant recommendations from the 2020 PBAR, examined reasons why little effective action has been taken on them and outlined key emerging topics in peacebuilding following the last PBAR that could be relevant for a comprehensive 2025 review.

The following are the key themes raised during the discussion:

- Importance of context

The discussion began with the recognition that the context in which the 2025 PBAR takes place is significant. The process is characterized by geopolitical tensions and numerous conflicts that are increasing in violence, including those in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, and the DRC, which challenge the concept of sustaining peace. In this context, it is hard to expect a strong outcome document from the 2025 PBAR, as geopolitical tensions influence pace and character of negotiations. Some participants proposed that the 2025 Review should concentrate on a select few issues where tangible change is feasible, especially if a comprehensive review akin to the 2015 version is not feasible due to capacity, time and resource constraints (as well as considerations about the likelihood to get consensus given deep polarization among member states). This focused approach may allow for small but meaningful strides towards improving peacebuilding efforts.

¹ See matrix of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review recommendations developed by NYU’s Center on International Cooperation at: <https://cic.nyu.edu/data/peacebuilding-architecture-review-matrix-of-recommendations/>

- Complementarity between the 2025 PBAR and the Pact for the Future

The 2025 PBAR coincides with the development of the Pact for the Future. The processes are complementary, offering a unique opportunity to reinforce each other and allowing the PBAR to address points that the Pact will not be able to include. Negotiations on the Pact for the Future can galvanize political support for the implementation of recommendations on strengthening the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and its prevention action. The Pact offers a good chance to include “hooks” for issues that can be addressed in detail during the Review and, as such, make the 2025 PBAR more impactful. If references to National Prevention Strategies (NPS) are included in the Pact, this would present an opportunity for follow-up during the PBAR on how to implement these strategies and the role of the PBC and the rest of the UN peacebuilding architecture in providing support to countries in that regard.

- Implementation deficit in previous PBAR recommendations

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the persistent implementation deficit concerning the recommendations and proposals for action from the previous PBARs as well as from previous SG reports on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. For example, NYU’s Center on International Cooperation has indexed nearly 1,000 recommendations submitted for the 2020 PBAR, extracted from 77 papers.² The most common topics were inclusivity, cross-pillar approach, financing, and national ownership. Participants suggested that, within the context of the 2025 PBAR, it is important to examine what recommendations and why these recommendations have not been effectively implemented and to unpack the reasons for limited progress thus far. Without addressing these issues, conducting the review in the same manner as before may result in repeating many of the same problems.

- Need to determine desired outcome

Participants agreed on the importance of defining the desired outcome document as a foundational step in planning for a successful review process. A clearer and shared understanding of the objectives of the review is essential for maximizing its efficiency. One of the considerations discussed is whether the desired outcome will be a set of procedural or substantive resolutions. If it is the latter, it is important to consider how the concept of peacebuilding and sustaining peace has evolved since the previous dual resolutions and what elements can a new resolution expand on based on the wealth of knowledge already gathered.

- Importance of inclusivity

Participants from both the UN and civil society appreciated that the 2020 PBAR demonstrated a real commitment to inclusivity. A PBAR should not be left solely to Member States or confined to discussions in New York, as there are many innovative ideas outside of that context. It is crucial to involve civil society and to foster community engagement. Because the 2020 PBAR was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it led to an extension in the originally short timeline, allowing for a greater number of consultations and input through submission of thematic papers. Furthermore, innovative methods for engaging stakeholders enabled broader outreach than anticipated during the informal stage. At the same time, a challenge in 2020 was that civil society was excluded once the process moved from the informal to the formal phase of the review. For

² See note 1.

the 2025 PBAR, engagement should not end when the SG report is issued at the end of 2024 and a formal intergovernmental process to follow in 2025.

To continue engaging civil society, even informally, Member States should consider partnerships with civil society that have strong outreach capabilities. These partnerships can bring in new voices and innovative ideas. In a time when civic space is shrinking, such collaboration is vital to ensure a diverse and inclusive process.

Participants noted that the short timeline of the PBAR remains a concern as it only allows for a limited number of consultations.

- Enhancing Financing for Peacebuilding

Progress on financing has been made since the 2020 PBAR, particularly with the adoption of General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/76/305 (2022) and A/RES/78/257 (2024) on the report of the Fifth Committee which has secured assessed contributions for the PBF. However, there are additional proposed actions within Resolution 305 that are still to be implemented. The language of the Pact related to financing for peacebuilding and prevention should be expanded beyond references to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The Secretary-General's report could emphasize all commitments on financing made in the resolution on financing for peacebuilding (A/RES/76/305). Member States should leverage the momentum of the negotiations on the Pact and the planning for the Summit, as well as the PBAR process, to explore opportunities to advance recommendations, innovation and developments focused on peacebuilding financing.

- National ownership for peacebuilding and prevention: learning from Kenya

The discussion touched on the question of what “national ownership” and leadership for peacebuilding and prevention strategies means. Lessons from Kenya can serve as inspiration and learning on how this can be interpreted. An exemplary case is Kenya's recent review of its peacebuilding architecture, which was conducted as an independent and inclusive process that examined national instruments and structures that contribute to prevention and peacebuilding. The review involved diverse stakeholders representing the complexity of Kenyan society and was led by an independent panel of advisors appointed by the government. The UN was invited to support and to facilitate that process. The conclusions and recommendations from the review were presented to the president and shared at a meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission together with Norway and East Timor who shared on their national processes. This example of Kenya exemplifies national ownership and leadership on peacebuilding and prevention and can serve as an inspiration for other Member States.

Based on the key takeaways from the discussion, the suggestions on how to best support planning by Member States, UN actors and civil society on input to the 2025 PBAR include:

- *Member States should approach the Pact and the PBAR as two complementary processes. In this, the Pact could serve as a strategic policy document that provides broad ideas on priorities to be taken up in detail during the 2025 PBAR.*
- *Member States should develop a shared understanding of the outcome they expect of the 2025 PBAR. A clearer expectation from the review is instrumental in maximizing its efficiency.*
- *Member States should involve civil society not only in informal but also in the formal phase of the review process. To continue engaging civil society, they should consider*

partnerships with civil society organizations and their networks that have strong outreach capabilities especially in the Global South.

- *Member States should leverage the momentum of the Summit to explore opportunities to advance recommendations, innovation and developments focused on peacebuilding financing. The focus in the Pact should be expanded beyond references to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).*
- *Member States should unpack the concept of ‘national ownership’ and could conduct a national PBAR.*
- *As part of the 2025 PBAR Member States and the UN system should consider looking at progress on the reform to the UN Development System, especially at the country level, and the impact this has had on the UN’s engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.*