CONCEPT NOTE:

PBC Ambassadorial-Level Meeting
Follow-up to the new twin resolutions A/RES/72/276 and S/RES/2413 (2018)

“Leadership, Accountability and Capacity
in Supporting Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”

I. Background

The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture highlighted the important role that effective and responsive leadership in country operations can play in bringing together the UN system around a common strategy for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The resolutions invited the Secretary-General to provide options to improve United Nations leadership, capability, and accountability—both at Headquarters and in the field—on efforts to sustain peace. Specifically, they asked for options to strengthen the capacity of the senior leadership of UNCTs to absorb relevant peacebuilding functions following the drawdown of Security Council-mandated missions.

Building on these requests, the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace presented recommendations for more effective and improved leadership, accountability and capacity in efforts to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The report also outlines detailed steps to be undertaken by the UN system, such as mapping UNCT capacity against peacebuilding priorities that have been discussed with Member States through the PBC, strengthening Resident Coordinator Offices to ensure their capacities match the needs of national priorities, ensuring the staff of Resident Coordinator Offices or supporting integrated presences in countries are well-equipped to implement peacebuilding activities in accordance with the UNDAF, using the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention as a model for enhanced capacities in the field, and increasing women’s leadership in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding at all levels.

In accordance with the workplan for the implementation of resolutions A/RES/72/276 and S/RES/2413 (2018) presented to the Commission on 15 May, the PBC convened a series of meetings at the expert-level to discuss ways to advance, explore and consider the recommendations and options contained in the Report of the Secretary-General. The objective of the third meeting, convened at Ambassadorial-level, is to have an exchange of views with the Secretary-General on the background and rationale behind the recommendations provided in his report on improving United Nations leadership, accountability and capacity in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
II. Guiding questions (TBC):

The following questions could be used to help guide the discussions:

- How can the PBC support efforts to strengthen UN leadership at Headquarters and in the field – as well as accountability and available capacities to sustain peace in mission and non-mission settings alike?
- How can the PBC support national and regional leadership, as well as accountability of Member States to implement the commitments for peacebuilding and sustaining peace?
- What are some good practice and lessons learned from past engagements?
- How do the different UN reforms help contribute to improved leadership, accountability and capacity for sustaining peace across the System?

Annex: Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: recommendations on Leadership, accountability and capacity in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace

29. I am determined to improve leadership, accountability and capacity across the United Nations system, both at Headquarters and in the field, so that the Organization can offer Member States the most effective possible support in sustaining peace. This will need to include efforts to ensure the continuity of relevant peacebuilding programmes, senior leadership and personnel through different phases of United Nations engagement, in order to improve transitions, and a strengthening of the capacity of the senior leadership of the United Nations country team to absorb relevant peacebuilding functions following the drawdown of Security Council-mandated missions.

30. The adoption in 2017 of a system-wide leadership framework underscores my commitment to improving leadership across the United Nations system. My system-wide strategy on gender parity is aimed at addressing the lack of parity at all levels, in particular in senior positions, and at improving organizational culture with respect to gender.

31. A major objective of the management reform proposals Member States have now endorsed is to decentralize decision-making, bringing it closer to the point of delivery and making the planning and budget process more accountable and responsive. I intend to empower heads of departments, offices, regional commissions and field missions to align authority in the management of financial, human and material resources with the delegated responsibility for mandate implementation. A clearer link between resources and results will serve to achieve greater transparency and accountability. The ability to manage resources effectively in response to urgent requirements, emerging risks and current operational needs will enhance the Organization’s effective and timely support in sustaining peace.
32. At the heart of my proposals for the repositioning of the United Nations development system is my conviction that a new generation of United Nations country teams is required for delivery on the 2030 Agenda, supported by empowered, impartial and competent resident coordinators. The proposals are also based upon the results of an independent review, conducted by the Overseas Development Institute, of the capacities of United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes to sustain peace. In its review, the Institute concluded that there was a need to strengthen capacities to conduct conflict or context analysis and to translate analysis into more conflict-sensitive programming. As integrators of policy concerning all of the Sustainable Development Goals, resident coordinators must be better prepared to work across the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding continuum. This includes a strong understanding of relevant United Nations normative frameworks and the ability to translate these into system-wide analysis, planning and programming. In conflict-affected settings, resident coordinators will need to ensure that United Nations country teams work in an integrated manner with United Nations peace operations to contribute fully to building resilience and sustaining peace. In relevant contexts, resident coordinators, including triple-hatted deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General, must receive integrated support from development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding entities in order to foster an integrated response that includes human rights and gender equality, and must be accountable for improving inter-agency collaboration to support national actors in risk management, resilience-building and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.

33. It is important that those in leadership positions in the field receive assistance from Headquarters, including guidance, training, surge capacities, peer-to-peer support and the delegated authority to take calculated risks in support of national priorities. Resident coordinators must have a diverse skillset, with strong leadership, team-building and communications skills, including in integrated planning, risk management, gender issues and human rights, in order to be able to promote coherence in a collaborative manner. It is also important for resident coordinators to have gained experience from working in United Nations system organizations and to be involved in continuing their professional education. I will encourage diversity of experience across peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian issues for all United Nations senior leadership, with improved and adequately incentivized inter-agency mobility, including across all three pillars of the United Nations.

34. The need for collaborative leadership is particularly in evidence when a United Nations peace operation is being drawn down. I recommend that, during the drawdown, a mapping of capacity of the United Nations country team against peacebuilding priorities be undertaken and discussed with Member States through the Peacebuilding Commission. This is what occurred in Liberia, where the assessment of capacities against the priorities outlined in the Liberia peacebuilding plan, conducted by the joint project of UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs on United Nations transitions in mission settings, showed the need for substantial investments through the United Nations
country team in order to continue peacebuilding efforts. Comprehensive gender analysis and effective planning are also essential to ensure that gains on gender equality are not eroded when peace operations are withdrawn. Another example of good practices in this regard is the integrated transition planning that took place in Côte d’Ivoire. Integrated planning at an early stage and throughout the life cycle of a mission is critical. Additional planning capacity should also be deployed where and when required.

35. Not all types of technical expertise are available within United Nations country teams or missions. Resident coordinators must be able to benefit from the expertise and assets of the entire United Nations system to ensure better delivery of their mandates. I will take steps to ensure that resident coordinators can draw more easily on advice from centres of expertise at Headquarters and at the regional level. In my report on repositioning the United Nations development system, I indicated that as part of the optimization of regional structures, the Organization would ensure that the development and review of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks included a more thorough analysis of regional and transboundary issues, with the regional commissions as an integral part of the process. The regional commissions could also play a supporting role in integrated analysis at the regional level and provide a convening platform for intergovernmental dialogue. Over the medium term, United Nations regional assets should be restructured so as to streamline and maximize the impact of the United Nations regional presence in support of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and, as part of that objective, sustaining peace.

36. In the report on the United Nations development system, I also included proposals to strengthen resident coordinator offices and ensure that capacities matched the needs of national priorities, building on the comparative advantages of the United Nations system. The United Nations system’s efforts must continue to be oriented around three key principles: reinforcing national ownership; developing country-contextual responses; and ensuring the effective delivery of development results on the ground. In considering the specificity of each context, I recommend that staff of the resident coordinator offices or of the integrated presence in a country have advisory responsibilities, in addition to planning and coordination, monitoring and evaluation and financing support functions, in accordance with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. I recommend that the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, which currently deploys more than 40 peace and development advisers to resident coordinator offices, in full agreement with the respective Governments, serve as a model for making such enhanced capacities available.

37. Under my proposal for restructuring the peace and security pillar, the single regional structure will offer guidance and support to resident coordinators in non-mission settings, in close cooperation with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The proposed Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and of Peace Operations will continue to house staff specialized in electoral affairs, mediation support, military affairs, police, rule of law, civil affairs, security sector reform, mine action
and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The proposed Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and of Peace Operations will also continue to support gender mainstreaming through their gender capacities, working closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Examples of flexible mechanisms that allow for the relevant expertise to be available at the appropriate time are the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers, the newly established High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, the United Nations single electoral roster, multidisciplinary teams deployed through the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations, the UNDP ExpRes Roster for Crisis Response, UN-Women regional advisers on women and peace and security and capacities deployed under the joint project of UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs on United Nations transitions in mission settings. The three regional special political missions in Central Africa, West Africa and Central Asia and the regional presence of agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are also important sources of advice and support in this regard. I will build upon these existing good practices in the provision of appropriate expertise and surge capacities to resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and peace operations to support national needs, including by encouraging all entities to work in effective cross-pillar partnerships.